Investigating Applicants' Perceptions of the Recruitment and Selection Process of Headteachers in English Secondary Schools: Looking at Headship Through a Leadership Identity Lens

Thesis

Bethany Katherine Kelly
BA (Hons), MA in Education (Leadership & Management)

Investigating applicants' perceptions of the recruitment and selection process of headteachers in English secondary schools: Looking at headship through a leadership identity lens

Doctorate in Education

Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology (CREET)
The Open University

September 2018

Abstract

Recruiting headteachers in the UK continues to be a challenge. The route to headship is often considered a mysterious and arbitrary process. It is challenging for a first time applicant to find ways to convey their leadership potential, through a selection process that has barely changed for over 20 years. This study reviews this process by drawing upon international research on principal appointments (Walker and Kwan, 2012, Blackmore et al., 2006, Browne-Ferrigno, 2003) and compares this with research on different perceptions of headship. This review is considered in light of leadership identity theory (Ibarra, 2003, Lord and Hall, 2005) and asks how this process looks from the perspective of the headship applicant. In what sense does an applicant have an understanding of their own leadership identity and are they confident that this can be communicated when applying for the headteacher role? This research examines the dual aspect of the recruitment and selection of headteachers. I have constructed a conceptual framework to map the pathway that the applicant takes and set this against the recruitment process to follow the applicant's journey through these stages.

The research brings together three different investigations; an online questionnaire of headship applicants, a textual analysis of headship recruitment packs, and follow-up semi-structured interviews with applicants, to form a multiple case design. Bringing these parts together, I examine how effective this process is, particularly against an interpretivist perspective of headship. Main findings suggest that certain models of leadership are communicated more effectively to applicants through the recruitment process than others, that the level of support for aspiring headteachers is hit and miss, depending upon their school context, and that the recruitment process would benefit from an integration with the language of leadership identity. Recommendations are made for revisions to initial teacher training as well as headship preparation training. The research will contribute to the field of educational leadership in what will be practical ways, for example, helping future applicants with preparation for senior leadership.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Robert Vardill for his amazing support and critical eye. I have had incredibly helpful feedback at every stage of this process, have been challenged and have been pushed to be better. His determination and patience is why I have made it this far. I would also like to thank my co-supervisor Dr Ray Chatwin for his time, his reflections and wealth of experience, introducing me to new worlds of scholarship. I feel so fortunate that both of my supervisors worked with me through the past few years with such good humour and encouragement that they inspired me to get to this point.

I want to dedicate my work here to Lib and Pog, whose unswerving faith in my ability to do this is what has carried me through those endless days. For Miss Pips who did everything she could to thwart my progress, but perhaps knew when it was time to take a break.

And for Toph who always makes me laugh, lifts my heart and keeps my feet on the ground.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1. Chapter One: Introduction

Having worked in education for over 20 years my teaching career led to me working in different Senior Leadership Teams. The next natural step for me was to go for headship roles and I was encouraged to apply for different headteacher posts, by people within the schools I was working in and by external recruiters. Having experienced the recruitment process, I found myself reflecting on the strengths and potential weaknesses of the appointment process and recognised how difficult a task it was to match applicant with post. Appointing headteachers in the UK continues to be rife with difficulties. It is a challenge for those appointing, with decreasing numbers of potential applicants, and it is challenging for those who are interested in applying, because the process is often mysterious and varied.

1.1 Aims of the research: the rationale for investigation

News articles over the past few years highlight different problems with the recruitment of headteachers, 'Top heads to be parachuted into schools' (BBC News, January 2014), 'Top Job may not be worth the hassle' (Woolcock, 2016), 'Headteacher recruitment 'increasingly difficult' warning' (BBC News, June 2014). Behind these headlines are stories of increased pressure on the head's role from an ever-changing educational landscape and as a result it is increasingly difficult to recruit for these posts. Posts remain vacant with interim occupants keeping things going and sometimes jobs are re-advertised a number of times. Chris Keates, General Secretary NASUWT, comments on the government's publication of Head Standards, 'With increasing difficulties in recruiting new headteachers, and with record numbers of teachers wanting to leave the profession, the Coalition Government has failed to recognise the damaging effect of its policies on the morale and confidence of teachers and school leaders.' (Speaking January 2015, NASUWT, 2014). There is also an identification of issues with the recruitment of headteachers in Scotland (TES, 19 September 2015). The Scottish government published a report that identifies the difficulty of recruiting and appointing headteachers. The report recognizes some of the obstacles to successful

appointments, suggesting that identifying potential leaders needs to be considered in a more formalized way so that 'the identification of future senior leaders is not left to chance' (Christie et al., 2016, p8).

In January 2015 the Department for Education published a new set of professional standards for headteachers, 'National standards of excellence for headteachers' (DfE, 2015). According to the government press release regarding the publication, the standards are 'designed to empower and inspire heads, drive aspiration, promote excellence and reflect the greater decision-making powers heads now enjoy' (Gov.uk, 2015). The aim of the standards is to promote the role of the headteacher as an example of strong leadership in the overall goal of education to raise standards. However, this is at a time when governing bodies are still finding it difficult to fill headship roles and sometimes have to re-advertise after unsuccessful first attempts. In 2006 the National College reported that a third of headships had to be re-advertised due to 'no suitable candidate' (Earley, 2013, p74).

Therefore problems of recruitment are being experienced in different sectors of education in the UK today, but this is compounded by an issue with retaining teachers, as Woolcock reports, 'Britain is facing a crisis in recruiting headteachers, with thousands complaining of high pressure and insufficient pay as they quit and retire early' (2016, p6). Issues with the recruitment of heads were also identified some years before (Earley et al., 2009) with talk of the 'demographic challenge' and the length of time it takes to appoint heads (2009, p295). With this unattractive depiction of the headteacher role it is not surprising that many schools are finding it more difficult to recruit. Given the pressures on this process, what has happened to the recruitment procedures themselves? Have the procedures adapted to the changing headship role and are those involved in the selection process changing their approach given the current climate? It is against this context that I want to investigate what is happening today with the recruitment of applicants for headship, their perceptions of the role and compare this with the main ingredients of the selection process.

It seems that the recruitment process is a distinct moment in that it brings together a number of different key roles as well as different practices, all with the particular focus of the headteacher role. These elements include the applicant, with their own thoughts about leadership, their experiences in education, their sense of wanting to make the transitions from teacher to headteacher. This is set against the presentation of the role in the recruitment process, where the details of what the role entails are presented to the applicant. Finally the recruitment process is set in the context of a particular school with particular activities and experiences for the applicant to complete. The goal of this process is the selection panel agreeing on which applicant is considered to be the best fit for the school in question.

I want to investigate the goal of making a successful appointment and in particular consider the challenges involved in matching the applicant's leadership identity with the post for which they are applying. These are themes, which I see emerging in my review of literature early on, for example MacBeath, Oduro, Jacka, and Hobby report (2006) 'The search for the right candidate needs to be guided by recognition of the specific context and culture of the school and a consideration of a best fit' (2006, p19). Is this what 'best fit' really means? Is it about leadership identity or is it about the post itself or is there a way that it is a combination of both? Has the presentation of headship posts moved away from our understanding of leadership in education? It is at this point I want to echo the words of Ibarra, Wittman, Petriglieri and Day when they begin their article on 'Leadership and Identity' in the 'The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organisation' with the statement, 'Identity has emerged as a potent force in understanding leadership' (2014, p285). As my research develops I am endeavouring to make use of this 'potent force' of identity (2014, p285) as a way of looking critically at the recruitment process of headteachers in particular and to make a new contribution to the educational leadership debate.

The responsibility placed upon the role of headteacher has become significant in recent years, with increasing pressure to raise standards, often with less available resources (Jones, 2008, Smith, 2011, Steward, 2014). However, given how pivotal this role is, in the success of the school, it is remarked that it is surprising that more time has not

been given over to researching the specific recruitment process. For example, Walker and Kwan write that 'until quite recently, principal selection has not received sufficient substantive attention by researchers internationally – the need for more empirical research remains' (2012, p189). Given that in England, issues regarding headship are often in the headlines, any research that can go into making the recruitment process more successful should be beneficial for educational practice.

1.2 Values and Perceptions underpinning my research

Early on in my teaching career, when I was introduced to the theories that lay behind Educational Leadership, I very quickly felt an affinity with the writings of Fullan, in particular his focus on moral purpose as an integral element of effective leadership. Fullan outlines what he considers to be an integral aspect of authentic leadership, 'Authentic leaders have distinctive style and substance and moral underpinnings (ideas, values and commitments)' (2004, p23). Over the years that I have taken on senior leadership roles in schools, I felt that there was less and less evidence of this being considered as valuable in the recruitment of headteachers. Whether that was actually the case is something that I want to investigate further.

My own experience is that the underpinning values rarely seem to be discussed in schools. I had always believed that effective leaders had their own vision of leadership, a sense of what they wanted to achieve, which was part of their motivation to take on that role. This is not to ignore that the role itself is changing with the development of different frameworks, for example the increasing importance of financial acumen as part of an aspiring headteacher's knowledge. My perception is that this knowledge is important to be a good leader, but to be authentic this knowledge would need to fit within the framework of a moral purpose. Over the years I have been teaching, I feel that the practical skills of headship, instead of being supporting knowledge needed to pursue a vision, have possibly become the framework itself, as indicated by documents such as the National Standards for Headship (DfEE 2000, DfE 2015). I want to see if ideas, such as an educational vision, still exist as part of the recruitment process and whether there is still a place for that sense of leadership potential.

These thoughts have led to the overarching idea of different perceptions of leadership that I have encountered during my time teaching. At times views on leadership appear to be logically inconsistent, with some advocates claiming leadership for all, and other times there is an emphasis on Character or Trait leadership, stressing the importance of successful candidates to have certain qualities (Northouse, 2013). I am keenly aware that not all may share my view of what constitutes authentic leadership. Coming from a philosophical background in terms of my subject specialism, I am particularly interested by the wide range of possible definitions when it comes to considering leadership. I am also interested in Wittgenstein's later theory of language found in the 'Philosophical Investigations' where he writes, 'the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (2009, no.43, p25). This idea, that it is the context in which a word is used that provides its meaning, resonates for me with the possible different understandings of leadership and headship, from different perspectives, and for the purposes of this research, the perceptions of the applicants in particular, at different stages of the recruitment process, in different contexts.

The other dimension that I bring to the research process is my interest in gender and leadership. In evaluating the efficacy of aspects of the recruitment process, a question that I want to ask applicants, is whether they believe it to be a fair process. Issues have been raised about the fairness of recruiting headteachers in terms of identity and diversity (Earley, 2013, Coleman, 2007, Smith 2011). I believe that asking questions as to whether gender is a factor in the recruiting and interviewing of headteachers fits closely with investigating perceptions of leadership identity. Not least the idea that gender sometimes suggests a type of leadership approach and that this could influence the perceptions both of those applying and those recruiting.

In identifying these factors as part of the values that I bring to the research process, I do recognize the ways in which these could impinge on the investigation. Whilst my research purpose is to investigate the recruitment process, it is important to recognize that in my current role I am no longer part of that process. That means that I am not applying for headship posts, nor am I involved in the appointment of others. Whilst my

values influence my interest in asking the questions regarding leadership identity they have not determined the answers.

1.3 Forming Initial Questions.

Initially I had adopted the title 'Do Some Teachers' Personalities Mean that they are More Likely to Become Headteachers?' in that I am querying whether some teachers have a higher chance of success with the current perceptions of headship and the existing recruitment procedures. Early questions that arose included:

1. How is the role of headteacher currently presented in the recruitment process?
2. What perceptions of headship can be taken from the documentation associated with the recruitment of heads?
3. Does the current recruitment process allow a fair identification of those making the transition to headship?
4. What can be established about the relationship between the identity of headteachers and the process of recruiting them?

In response to the literature review, I have developed a conceptual framework to map what is happening at different stages of the recruitment and selection process. This mapping begins by recognising the significance of Walker and Kwan (2012) using the Hay group identification of stages in the appointment of headteachers, adopted by the National College of School Leadership to investigate the selection and appointment processes. Following through this process involves considering how the identity of the potential headteacher can be successfully communicated. This forms the beginnings of my conceptual framework in terms of the perception of this process from the applicant's point of view. The development of this framework whilst conducting the literature review has enabled me to shape the research questions themselves.

1.4 Thesis Structure

Following this introduction the thesis continues with Chapter Two, the Literature Review. This begins with a summary of relevant information that has emerged about

the context of appointing headteachers including a review of formal leadership preparation and a discussion of leadership succession. Following this setting in context, I outline the way in which I have developed my conceptual framework to map the process and describe how this could be used not only to state what is happening at each stage, but also to investigate perceptions at each point of those applying. After a brief exploration of the significance of key terms, the remainder of the literature review uses the conceptual framework to investigate the different stages of the process and to begin to consider the underpinning ideas that form the basis of my research questions. Chapter Three looks at Methodology. I begin by outlining the reasoning behind my research paradigm and go onto to consider the implications of this in terms of research approach. In light of these ideas I consider the choices made in establishing the research design and the use of different methods. This is considered first in terms of an online questionnaire, then a review of headship recruitment packs and then with regard to follow-up semi-structured interviews with some of those who have applied for headship roles. Chapter Four looks at the Findings of how all three different methods begin to answer the research questions. The implications of these findings for educational practice are considered in the Discussion in Chapter Five. Final thoughts and Conclusions are then outlined in Chapter Six.

2. Chapter Two: Literature Review

The focus of the literature review begins essentially as a quest to see what has been written about the recruitment process and how this influences an understanding of what makes a successful appointment. I look at the current English context with regards to training for and expectations of headship. I then look at some international comparisons to enable future evaluation work. Having looked at the context of recruitment, I use the information gathered to structure the remainder of the Literature Review. For example, my review of relevant literature on identity theory (Ibarra 2003, Jones 2008, Lasky 2005), confirms the need for further research on the dynamic between what I see as two sides of the recruitment process; applicant and recruiter, but in this instance I am looking at the different stages of the process from the perspective of the applicant. This is one way in which I begin to investigate the literature and then structure my review. I want the scope of the review to focus on the perspective of applicants, their experiences of going through this process, with their goal being to successfully convey their leadership potential for the head role. This is then set in the context of the different actions and activities of the recruitment and selection process itself and how this is evaluated both in England and abroad.

Ibarra writes about the change in identities that occurs when the transition is made from one job to another (2003). This includes the need to acknowledge which 'personal characteristics' ensure the right fit with a different role in a specific organization (2003, p36). Ibarra recognises that there is a process of growing into a leadership role and that it is entirely possible for that process to be hampered by other identities (2017). Therefore my intention with the literature review is to investigate current practice both in England and by comparison internationally as well. I also want to see if it is possible to explore the different stages of the recruitment process as well as view the process through the lens of leadership identity. The four stages that are then used to structure the remainder of the Literature Review are:

- Recruitment Anticipation
- Recruitment Actions

  (Literature relevant to the shift in power at this stage)

- Selection Activities
- Selection Achievement

2.1 Context of Recruiting Headteachers

Perceptions of headship continue to be unattractive to many teachers and middle managers, resulting in difficulties when filling headship vacancies. Earley cites Government data that shows a decline in the numbers of full-time headteachers and a decline in the number of full-time deputies, from 2005 until 2011 (2013, p53). Earley writes (2013, pp72-3) that the National College discovered in 2006 that a third of secondary schools had to re-advertise headship vacancies and refers to a change in demography as one of the reasons for this. In recent years Earley describes changes in the challenges facing senior leaders. In the 'Review of the School Leadership Landscape', carried out by Earley and others for the National College for School Leadership, the main challenge facing headteachers is managing reducing budgets (2013, p75). Other challenges include inspection frameworks, pressures relating to Academy status, raising student standards and staff recruitment and retainment (2013, p76).

The introduction of the National Professional Qualification for Headship in 1997 seeks to outline the standards needed for professional headship and provide a formal headship preparation course. This provided a mandatory qualification for headship from 2004 until its mandatory status was reviewed in 2012. As it stands at present, the course consists of three compulsory modules with the study of an additional two modules, chosen from a possible nine options. Looking at the three compulsory modules: 'Leading and Improving Teaching, 'Leading an Effective School' and 'Succeeding in Headship' (DfE, 2014, updated 2015) I feel that the content is predominantly focused on what the head is expected to do, rather than who the head is expected to be. Perhaps the one exception to this is the reference to 'how to manage your time and maintain resilience' as part of 'Succeeding in Headship'. It appears that in contrast to the lists of desirable requirements outlined in headship recruitment packs, the emphasis on all 12 of the modules is knowledge and skills rather

than the individual as leader. Whether this is evident in the wording for the recruitment of headteachers is considered in my analysis of headship recruitment packs and how this is perceived by applicants is discussed below (see 3.4.1).

Gronn identifies the NPQH as part of the new-managerialism, describing its emphasis on standards as 'solutions in search of problems' (2003, p10). By this Gronn is suggesting that the approach of the NPQH implies that leadership in school is about knowing pre-packaged solutions to ensure schools perform to their best. Gronn suggests three assumptions underpin this approach, firstly there is an assumption that those setting the standards know better. Secondly, it suggests that a 'uniformity of conduct' is preferable and finally the goal is for an emphasis on compliance (2003, p10). This seems to imply narrow expectations for headship, that successful candidates are those who can conform to a common set of skills and standards and this appears to echo with my preliminary concerns. This could present a reductionistic view of headship as a checklist of requirements to follow. I am inclined to agree with this understanding of an emphasis on uniformity, it seems to ring true with my experience, but I want to see whether this is evident as part of the recruitment process and whether this is the perception of headship applicants.

Given the potentially reductionistic view of the NPQH it is worth perhaps reflecting at this point as to whether there is any obvious connection or correlation with ideas of leadership identity. Lumby and English argue that the basis of the NPQH programme is one that is based on a 'tradition of a philosophy of mind founded in materialistic monism in which self and identity are synonymous' (2009, p108). In stating this they feel that this prohibits an exploration of leadership identity that is about reflecting upon your own development, they go so far as to say that this form of approach is 'without deep consideration or self-awareness of intention or the significance of ritualized leadership action' (2009, p108). So although there may be an awareness of the changing identity it is too narrow an understanding of the implications of that process. Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill (2009) make the connection between preparation for the NPQH and the need for Role-Identity transformation as outlined by Browne-Ferrigno (2003), which will be explored further. Gunter suggests that an

aspiring applicant may find that their professional identity may conflict with the 'contractual and contracting processes' of the NPQH and when faced with this challenge will have the choice to 'either succumb, tolerate or resist' (1999, p262). By comparison, Cowie and Crawford suggest that formal headship preparation courses may be beneficial going so far as to say that these can help by introducing the new leaders to 'new forms of language and new understandings and helped validate their new professional identity' (2009, p13). Whether the language contained within the NPQH coheres with the language of identity investigated here, will be considered further.

English challenges the usefulness of the standards arguing that 'the standards represent disembodied skills, concepts, and ideas distanced from the theories that spawned them' (2006, p463). Wildy, Pepper and Guanzhong also raise the problem of focusing on standards as criteria for appointing Senior Leaders in their review of recruitment procedures in Australia, as they feel that they are 'frequently weakened by fragmentation into a long list of duties' (2011, p279). With the shift to accountability, the perception of the headteacher is one of the heroic leader able to lead the school to the expected standards (Gronn, 2003, p17). This is heroic in the sense that you are succeeding, if not then there appears to be a developing metaphor of the 'Headteacher as Football Manager' who has to leave at the first sign of failure (Independent, 2014), adding to its potential undesirability as a role. This ties in with the recognition that the post of headteacher is a distinct post in itself and not a continuition of other teacher roles (Bush, 2013). Given my focus of bringing together the identity of the individual with the post and context, it is useful to note that Wildy, Pepper and Guanzhong add that the focus on standards could result in neglecting other aspects including the 'quality of performance of school leaders' which they felt was 'linked to personal attributes' (2011, p279). Their research goes on to consider alterative approaches to principal selection based upon performance-based tasks, for example, looking at psychometric testing.

With the emergence of school leadership as kind of uniformity (Gunter and Thomson, 2009, p476), the recruitment of headteachers is less about the identity of the individual

and more about the corporate or political message to be conveyed. This could depend upon who is behind the appointment, either a state appointment, an appointment made by an Academy or Academy chain, or the Governing body of an Independent School. A number of research papers draw attention to the focus on action, with this emphasis on standards (Bush, 2013, Gunter, 2001, Gronn, 2003, Gunter and Thomson, 2009). Earley cites Fink (2010) when he suggest that perhaps there is 'a contradiction between the requirement for leaders to be visionary, creative and entrepreneurial and the policy realities they live with' (2013, p15). Is this what current recruiters of headteachers actually think? This certainly raises questions as to what place, if any, the individual's vision of education has to play in the recruitment process and how this is determined through selection, which is something I want to raise with those involved with the process.

2.1.1 Leadership Succession: identifying potential

One way in which the problem of appointing leaders has been anticipated is when adopting the practice of leadership succession. Fink distinguishes between succession planning and succession management, writing that succession planning is having the right person available for the post, whereas succession management is a coherent development of potential leaders within the organisation (2010). Both of these approaches are distinct to a formal headship preparation course such as the NPQH. In England, nowhere is the issue of succession planning perhaps more evident at present than in Multi Academy Trusts. Questions can be asked as to why succession management has been adopted for leadership appointments. Could it be that this approach will be the one that will ensure that the leadership is always in line with the philosophy of the Trust? Certainly, Ball writes that employing leadership succession 'exposes the sinews of structure and power in the organization in a unique way' (2012, p151). Fink suggests that if succession management is to work that it needs to be about the right person being prepared and that the purpose needs to be clear. Fink writes that if 'school leadership matters, and leadership succession matters, then the moral purposes that motivate leadership matter more' (2010, p6). If this is the case, then this reassuringly resonates with the moral imperative explored in Fullan

(2004) that I believe should underpin school leadership. Gibson (2018) recognises that whilst there is an imperative for leaders to establish future leaders, the 'danger of such LPD [Leadership Preparation and Development] is one that creates leaders who may lack vision and knowledge about alternative directions' (2018, p93). However, what appears to be a strength of the internal approach of leadership succession is the peer-to-peer development that can take place across schools as part of career and school appraisal (Gibson, 2018). Leadership development takes place in a targeted way where potential is spotted early on and nurtured. Although this may be a goal, there is of course nothing to stop these nurtured leaders then leaving the MAT and this appears to be the case in Gibson's small-scale study (2018). One reason for this may be that to be part of this leadership succession, particularly within a MAT, requires adoption of a particular set of values. Gibson recognise this issue writing that there is 'a danger that if MAT driven LPD has little quality assurance it may not provide that level of criticality' (2018, p96). It may be that a serious consideration of succession management needs to be considered along with the mentoring that that would entail.

2.2 Conceptual Framework: Mapping the four-stage process

Early on in my literature review I found it incredibly helpful to make use of Walker and Kwan (2012), in particular the way they reference the Hay group identification of stages in the appointment of headteachers, adopted by the National College of School Leadership. The Hay document outlines seven stages of the appointment process as preparation, definition, attraction, selection, appointment, induction, and evaluation (2012, p189). In particular I knew I wanted to investigate the first five and in greater detail, the definition of the role, the need for attraction, how selection takes place and the appointment process. Beginning with these stages helped with the task of mapping the recruitment process. Going on with the literature review I want to see whether it is possible to bring this together with the identity of the potential headteacher and whether that potential leadership identity can be successfully recognised through this process thus showing agreement, consistency and transparency on the part of those selecting.

It seems sensible to map the two concurrent pathways through the process, that of the applicant, and in reflection what is happening in terms of recruitment or selection, and to use this as a way of recording my findings from the literature review. Once these pathways are established the various stages of the process are defined. The original diagram (Figure 2.1) sets up the two parallel pathways involved in the recruitment of headteachers. The orange pathway is the path of the applicant and the blue pathway shows the mirroring pathway of the recruitment process. I revised the diagram (Figure 2.2, p20) to indicate the different stages of the process and also to be able to represent which aspect had a sense of dominance at which stage.

Figure 2.1. Diagram of Four Stage Process of Leadership Development matched against headship recruitment

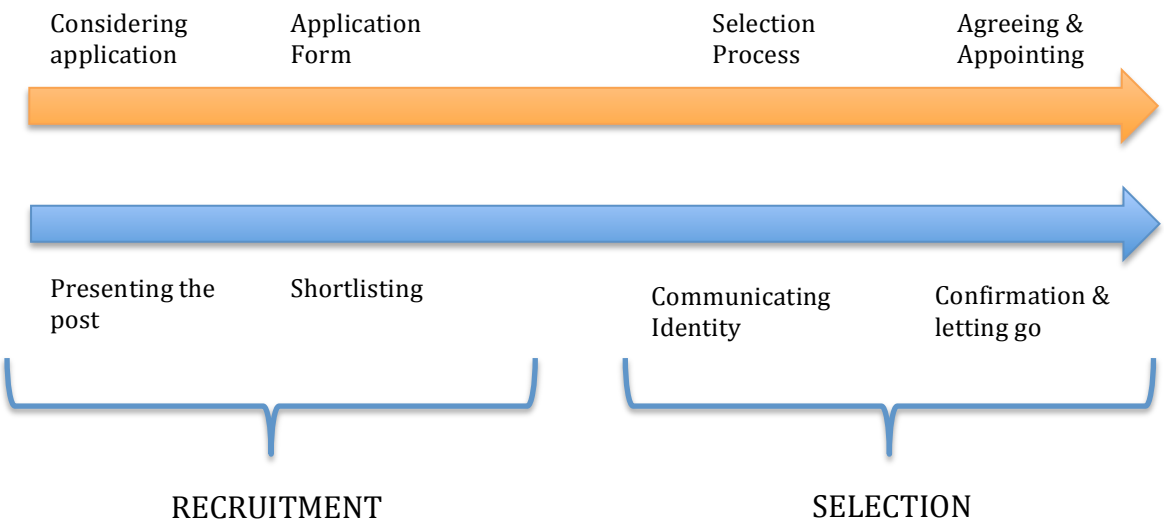
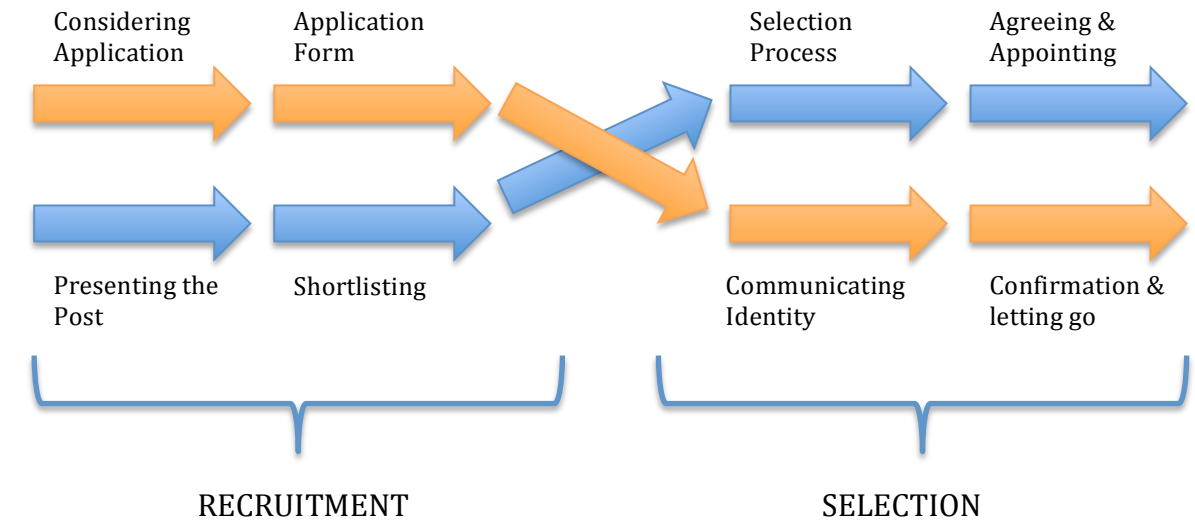


Figure 2.2. *Revised diagram of Four Stage Process of Leadership Development matched against headship recruitment*



This indicates the path of the person applying

This indicates the recruitment and selection process

In the first stage the applicants are considering their own suitability and positioning. If they continue with the process, this results in them putting an application together, stage two, in response to an advertisement or referral. For these first two stages the applicant has the dominant role, hence uppermost in the diagram. This is because they are being encouraged to apply by those advertising, hoping for as wide a field as possible to select from. The post needs to be made to be attractive enough to encourage teachers to apply. This presentation of the post is something I want to examine further as, in my experience as a Deputy Head and had discussed headship posts with fellow Deputies, the accompanying pack was often dismissed. I want to see whether this has an impact on the applicants and if so, what is it?

The current recruitment process followed in England means that the schools are initially in the less dominant role for these first two stages. In the first stage they are deciding upon the kind of leader they are looking for who will be suitable for the particular role. This needs to be balanced enough to be honest regarding the demands of the task, but at the same time it has to be attractive enough to encourage

applicants. Those in the position of needing to recruit also decide how they intend to seek this person. This could be via advertisements or via the employment of a recruitment agency. Once the applications are in, there is a power shift triggered by the shortlisting process, where the number of applicants is reduced to those who could be interviewed in the next stage. It is with this model in place that I am able to continue to structure my literature review. Once I complete my review of literature I can then review this model to see if any further adjustments are needed, in light of subsequent findings.

Refining this process enables me to be more focused and to re-evaluate my research questions as I go through each stage. This allows me to see that there are distinct actions or intentions with each aspect of the process and therefore how the applicant might perceive these.

2.3 Identification of Key Terms

It is common for words such as self, personality and identity to be used interchangeably when discussing leadership, when it is preferable to look at the distinct meaning associated with these terms. Understanding their psychological, philosophical and sociological definitions is helpful, before I consider what happens to an individual's sense of leadership identity within education.

2.3.1 Identity.

Crow and Møller trace the contextual basis of identity formation back to Hegel saying that 'Hegel believed that we cannot create identities in isolation, but rather we live, work, and play in cultural and historical contexts' (2017, p752). Blustein and Noumair look to Erikson (1968) for their understanding of identity as a 'notion of ego identity [that] captures a "narrow subset of experience" derived from "the inner sense of accord or discord between the individual and the social environment' (1996, p434). This encapsulates the idea that our identities are formed through on-going relationships with our environment. This also leads onto a sense of identity in terms of

career, as we are perceived within our work environment. Ibarra (1999) takes as her understanding of identity a view put forward by Gecas (1982) that 'identity refers to the various meanings attached to a person by self and others' (1999, p767). Lumby and English also outline this idea of the construction of identity when they describe identity as 'self- and co- constructed to achieve a sense of coherence, worth and belonging, primarily through on-going narratives and relationships' (2009, p95). These definitions suggest that our sense of identity develops through our interactions with others in different environments. Ibarra (2017) suggests that this changing identity is based upon changing what we do which then allows us to change the way we think. Given the amount of time we spend at work it is not surprising that the job we do gives us a sense of identity. By focusing on the identity of the individual we look at the agency of the individual person within the structures found within society, in this case in the organisation of secondary schools.

Day and Harrison (2007) make the connection of leader identity to an understanding of self that can be traced back 'to the writings of William James in the late 19th century' (2007, p365). Ibarra, Wittman, Petriglieri and Day (2014) acknowledge that there can be three aspects combined with a sense of leadership identity, 'individual, relational, and collective identities' (2014, p286). This enables leadership to be seen as in terms of 'identity processes', recognizing the transition that takes place as individuals move from one state to another, rather than static. Ibarra (2017) also raises an important relationship between the leadership transition and a sense of authenticity, recognising that the process of changing can often make people feel inauthentic. In this instance I am investigating whether there is an on-going construction of the applicant's leadership identity and how this is communicated.

2.3.2 Personality.

'Early leadership theories were based on the premise that outstanding leaders differed in important ways from average people due to their extraordinary personalities' (Humphrey, 2014, p37). The word personality here is understood in the sense of a

combination of certain traits. There already exists already a great deal of literature on trait leadership (Humphrey 2014, Northouse 2013, Haslam et al., 2011).

Studies have been carried out on the correlation between certain traits and examples of leadership (Hoffman et al., 2011). These studies are often referred to as 'Great Man' research, as a reference back to Thomas Carlyle when he wrote 'The history of world was the biography of great men' (quoted in Humphrey, 2014, p37). This also identifies a gender bias that may well still exist today.

2.3.3 Self.

Different interpretations exist regarding the understanding of self. It is possible to see that if one holds a philosophical underpinning of materialism the emphasis on matter as substance points to the unity of self, in terms of the individual. If the idea of self is seen as originating from the mind (Mead, 1934) then this can lead to a dualistic view, seeing the self as 'a distinct object' (Burke and Stets, 2009, p10). Given the framework outlined regarding the sense of identity through the interaction of our own thoughts with others, the most complimentary view of the self is to see this in the way that Burke and Stets (2009) explain the views of McCall and Simmons (1978). Burke and Stets say it is possible to see the self as a 'reflexive behaviour' (2009, p9) and therefore to see the functioning of the self as 'an organised set of processes' (2009, p9). This idea of self as process allows for development over time and in response to the environment one finds oneself in. It might be possible to consider the relationship between self and identity through the responses to this research.

2.4 Recruitment Anticipation

It can be said that those appointing look for the best fit for their role. However, it could also be argued that before the external scrutiny of the applicant can begin, an internal shift needs to take place; the applicant's self-belief that one is capable of assuming the headship position. For someone to consider applying for the post of headteacher, they

must feel at least in some part that this is a role that they are able to take on. I want to investigate further to what extent applicants, particularly those applying for their first headship, have already acquired a sense of leadership identity. Gronn suggests that 'it remains unclear how and why some individuals acquire that belief and others appear not to' (1999, p67). This is something to consider for those interested in applying for headship. Do they recognise the need for an identity shift? If so, how and when do they think this happens. Miscenko, Guenter and Day suggest this is an area that needs further investigation; 'the development of leader identity over time and its association with leadership skills have not been addressed in any detail in the empirical literature' (2017, p1). For example, Notman (2017) explores the links between understanding concepts of leadership identity in relation to the ability of the leader to manage change. Sinha and Hanuscin suggest that leadership identity as a 'development was gradual and time dependent, versus being an abrupt change' (2017, p367).

It is interesting to see that a question raised by the ethical approval process was that those being interviewed might not understand what is meant by 'identity' when coming to look at the identity journey being explored through this four-stage process. As stated above I take my understanding of identity as the co-construction of meaning attached by ourselves and by others (Ibarra, 1999, p767), based on definitions from Ibarra (1999) and Gecas (1982). This combines an intrinsic understanding of self, combined with one attributed by others. When looking at pathways to headship, Gronn refers to the career pathway as a coming together of 'character' and 'strategy' (1999, pxii). A key difference between Gronn's understanding of character, and what I am taking here as being identity, can be seen by looking at his definition of character as, 'the totality of the moral, personal and social attributes that comprise the person' (1999, pxii). Crow and Møller suggest that this is an essential quality that looking at leadership identity brings, in that it helps 'us understand the importance of who leaders are, specifically their professional identities and acknowledging that who they are influences what they do' (2017, p750). However, the understanding of identity based on the definitions from Ibarra (1999) and Gecas (1982) also includes a sense of self that comes from the opinions of others. In fact Ibarra raises the possibility of 'competency traps' (2017) in that it is easy for individuals to be good within their

current role and this will mean others come to you, which sometimes cements you into that role. Therefore to apply for a different role requires you to step outside of your own comfort work zone. Following on from these explanations it suggests that the applicant's sense of identity is acquired in two ways as a result of other peoples' responses as well as a shift in their own perception of self. However, this is not necessarily immediately known.

Guillén, Mayo and Korotov (2015) outline leadership identity in terms of understanding motivation to lead and the ways in which individuals make comparisons in order to adopt their sense of identity. These ways are referred to as '*self-to-leader comparisons'*, these are broken down into two categories, firstly, *self-to-exemplar* where individuals compare themselves to leaders known, past or present, or secondly *self-to-prototype* comparisons where individuals compare themselves to 'more general representations of leaders' (2015, p802). In this process it is most likely that applicants may compare themselves to the representation of leadership they find in the headship recruitment materials. However, part of their motivation to lead could also stem from comparisons with leaders they have experienced themselves within education, both good and bad. The strength of that comparison underpins the individual's motivation to adopt a leader identity themselves. Day, Harrison and Halpin also introduce the idea of identity spirals, both positive and negative, in the sense that they either receive confirmation of their leadership identity so prompting the positive spiral or that they have an experience that will 'weaken one's identity as a leader' (2009, p185).

Whilst there have been some changes to the process since the 'chaotic' approaches outlined in Morgan, Hall and Mackey (1983, p26), the recruitment process itself has not come under a high level of scrutiny. Given the difficulty of making successful appointments, the 'vulnerability' of the applicant (Gronn and Lacey, 2004) and the transition of identity, it is worth questioning whether applicants are confident in process itself, that it is able to recognize those with potential, alongside those with established experience and the difference between the two.

2.4.1 Recruitment Anticipation – Considering Application

Blustein and Noumair (1996) compare self, in the sense of an individual, as one with 'the capacity to initiate action and to attain a sense of coherence, self-esteem and consistency' (1996, p433) with a sociological perspective of self as 'anchored in a social context in which individuals derive a sense of self from their own subjective experiences…'(1996, p433). For the teacher there are always these two dimensions to a sense of identity. There is internal sense, often spoken of in terms of vocation. For some this is a sense of 'who I am' and not just 'what I do'. However, teacher identity is absolutely embedded in the social setting of the classroom. The point of considering leadership, or as Lord and Hall suggest, taking on a 'provisional identity as a leader' (2005, p602) is often considered in conjunction with moving away from the classroom. The social transition is considered as the first hurdle and is often cited as a reason for teachers to reject applying for headship (Smith, 2011). Crow and Møller outline the key aspects of professional identities and the fourth is an important reminder when considering potential identity shift, it is that 'identities are fluid and dynamic' (2017, p723). Ibarra recognises that this shift requires changes to the way that you think and this may mean you need to be encouraged to try (2017).

When a teacher considers applying for headship I want to examine whether there has been a change of self-understanding, through the relationships, interactions and experiences encountered. For example, leading a working group, taking responsibility for a department or whole-school initiatives could cause these aspects of identity to be challenged. As confidence grows in leading, other factors happen, for example changes to 'social relationships that reinforce this self-conception' (Ibarra et al., 2014, p286). There is a relationship between the internal shift in identity and the social position of the teacher, as they take on different responsibilities. We can legitimately ask whether both are needed for successful leadership, in other words if the candidate has experience, but has not internalized leadership in terms of their own identity, will they be effective within the role. Ibarra argues that leadership identity is gained through participation in leadership work, and she suggests that this work 'sparks two interrelated processes, one external and one internal' (2016, p4). This is part of the 'act then think' process that is central to identity transition (Ibarra, 2017). It can be

argued that before the external scrutiny can begin an internal shift needs to take place; the self-belief that one is capable of assuming the headship position. It is this self-belief that potentially can be communicated through the different aspects of the recruitment process. This gives an interesting opportunity to compare these ideas with the participants I am investigating through this research.

Gronn and Lacey researched a group of aspirant headteachers, encouraging them to keep what they called 'identity narratives' as they explored this transition, which was called their 'positioning space' (2004, p405). Lord and Hall suggest that to 'sustain interest for the months and years required to develop and practice complex leadership skills, it is also likely that the leadership role needs to become part of one's self-identity' (2005, p592). Day and Harrison remark that 'the development of a leader identity is critically important in the ongoing and continuous development of a leader' (2007, p365). This is something to consider for those interested in applying for headship. Do they recognise the need to reflect upon their leadership-self? This includes an understanding that if there is no shift it may be the underlying cause for someone unable to be successful in acquiring such a post, including recognising that this is not the same as having the relevant experience and qualifications (Crow and Glasock, 1995). Ibarra recognises it is possible to acquire a range of new experiences, but there still has to be a change in terms of sense of self (2017).

Thomson (2009) considers the internal identity shift needed for someone to apply for headship, identifying that it is a deliberate decision to change identities, to become 'someone other than a teacher' (2009, p29). When you enter teaching you are trained to effectively deliver material in the classroom so to make the decision to take on a leadership position is actually a step towards a different job. I want to see whether there is any evidence of that deliberate step in a different direction. That awareness of otherness could begin to emerge once leadership, whole school tasks are undertaken with the recognition that there are alternative experiences working within a school. This could also be explained in the language of identity theory where two of four measures of identity shift have been described as 'measure' and 'strength'. 'Measure' is seen as the 'definition of leadership held by an individual' and 'strength' is

understood as the 'extent to which an individual identifies as a leader' (Miscenko et al., 2017, p2). These might be different categories, but in what sense do those applying for headship have a measure of their own leadership and how strong does the conviction need to be for them to act upon that, for example, are there any differences of what can be seen of this according to gender?

For Gronn (1999), this self-awareness of an alternative role could come from recognising how others perceive you. The shift in identity for the aspiring Head could then begin to be measured in how colleagues turn to the individual in recognition of a perceived leadership quality. This could be as obvious as a colleague suggesting to the individual that they would make a good Head or it could be that they defer to them in terms of direction or advice. If the shift begins to occur, through the verification given by another person's recognition, then it would support the work that mentors could do within education and this could be considered a good example of reinforcing the positive identity spiral (Day et al., 2009, p185). Considering this is something that forms part of my interview process. This perception of self via others links to an understanding of identity within a particular social environment. Also, that colleagues would defer to their experience and judgment is an indicator of the social dimension of the identity shift that is taking place. Although we have already seen that this does not have to result in a step to headship and could result in someone ending up in a 'competency trap' (Ibarra, 2017). In fact, what could end up being a useful distinguishing factor in the appointment of headteachers, would be questioning related to in what sense they do they see themselves as this leader. Some researchers (Lord and Hall, 2005, Day and Harrison, 2007) have talked about a development of identity as experience progresses and that this can be indicated primarily through a stronger sense of the context and collective rather than a focus on the individual. So in this instance, do the applicants focus on self, or do they focus on their role within the community? In an interview do they talk about themselves or what they have done? It is interesting to see what emerges through further investigation of applicant's perceptions. Interestingly Day and Harrison outline one way in which this developed sense of self can be identified, in that the leader has 'a more collective identity is related to moral development, perspective-taking, and advanced levels of moral reasoning' (2007,

p367). Given what has been previously outlined concerning Fullan (2004) and the moral imperative it is worth making note of this. Walker also draws attention to what he calls a leader's 'moral authority' by which he means that the leader has a 'quality in their lives, values and ideals that in itself gave them authority among their peers' (2010, p137). This too seems to resonate with Day and Harrison's 'advanced levels of moral reasoning' (2007, p367). Evidence of these qualities in aspiring head applicants is also worth investigating.

What also reflects that transitional time of identity is Gronn and Lacey's explorations of the 'vulnerability' of the aspiring headteacher (2004). Gronn and Lacey talk of this time, which corresponds to my recruitment anticipation stage, as a time when 'there exists no regime of legitimized feelings and for which there are few clear navigational aids in the form of rules and conventions' (2004, p405). They refer to those who inhabit this space and time as experiencing 'the beginnings of a reconstruction of the self', which is stated as the process of 'occupational identity change' (2004, p406). Thomson (2009, p30) references Holland, Lachicote, Skinner and Cain's (1998) four stages of identity formation:

1. 'Identity devaluation' where the development of one identity means the letting go of an old identity;
2. 'Personalisation of the identity' – formulated through the interaction with significant others;
3. 'Emotional attachment to the new identity';
4. 'Identity reconstitution, through exorcising negative practices (2009, p30)

The beginning of this formation is seen in the appointment process, in that I suggest that the 'identity devaluation' is part of the confirmation of identity when someone is appointed and the transition, which involves letting go in this instance, of the teacher identity (see 2.5.2 Recruitment Actions – Shortlisting). The personalization of the identity is also, I believe, part of the appointment process in that interviewing with members of the governing body and meeting staff during the interview is not just an activity in itself, but it is also the start of building new potential relationships.

Alongside this notion of identity, Burke and Stets put forward a specific idea of 'worker identity' based upon Stryker's views (1980) that the sense of identity corresponds to the different roles that an individual has within society (2009, p25). However, Burke and Stets suggest that the 'worker identity' is less likely to change in response to other people's views (2009, pp192-3), this is something I question and suggest instead that the formation of leadership identity is, in part, in response to other people's views. Instead they suggest that the 'worker identity not only was internalised, but also verified and maintained in spite of other's views' (2009, p193). They suggest that the perception of others is less likely to result in an identity shift. This suggests that the impetus for identity shift is internal, rather than external forces. Therefore even if others are suggesting a move to a leadership role, it is unlikely to happen unless this is something that is already present within the self. This relationship between the internal and external forces determining shift is something that I can analyse further by asking relevant questions of aspiring headteachers. If it is not due to external suggestion, then the question remains as to whether triggers for the step to leadership can be identified. What is prompting them to apply in the first instance?

Perhaps the internal impetus is identified when considering Ibarra as she writes about the move to a new career as reflective of what you want to be, involving the external change of a new job, but also an internal change of finding a 'greater congruence between who you are and what you do' (2003, p34). This implies an internal resonance, triggered by participation in and experience of the leadership environment. Making the decision to apply could and perhaps should involve reflection on an individual's internal educational vision. This goes beyond having the right experience, characteristics, or skills. Taking on leadership responsibilities, may feel like being true to the teacher's sense of self. Browne-Ferrigno writes about the the 'Role-Identity' change as one of the 'most interesting aspects' (2003, p488) of the changes undergone by those participants in her study of aspiring principals in America. For Browne-Ferrigno the journey of heading to principalship is a 'transformative process' (2003, p470). She discusses the change in mindset that happens as teachers consider taking on the role of principal. One of the participants reflects on the reasons as to why their thinking has changed and attributes this to their experience that 'others viewed him

differently' (2003, p489). This brings together the reflection in others, identity in terms of social relationships and a view of self as outlined in Gronn (1999) with the identity shift seen in Ibarra (2003). This process seems to be entirely plausible, however, I wonder how many aspiring heads have the opportunity to reflect on their own sense of self. Do opportunities need to be made for there to be even a chance for this to be considered?

Browne-Ferrigno suggests from her research that 'Differences in age and experience' appear to be a factor in determining the applicants' 'readiness to assume administrative leadership responsibilities' (2003, p481). Age, experience and even gender are refered to as 'insurmountable roadblocks' for possible principal appointments (2003, p482). Experience may come from other areas, but provides transferable confidence in terms of self-belief in their leadership potential. One of Browne-Ferrigno participants, a 60-year-old ex-business executive is quoted as saying 'Leadership is a state of mind as well as a state of being…My past experiences coupled with the knowledge that I have acquired provide me with a sense of confidence' (2003, p487). So experience may not be direct experience of headship, but could be experience of other areas of leadership or management. There are different reasons why that leadership identity shift occurs to establish a readiness to move to the leadership role of headteacher. Another of Browne-Ferrigno's participants describes the identity shift with the metaphor that it is like wearing 'a new pair of glasses' and that these allow her to use her classroom experience to pave the way for the leadership role (2003, p489). Another participant speaks specifically in terms of the shift saying that, 'It was an ideology or paradigm shift that helped me to see myself in that new perspective...I'd say the shift came [mostly] from me, just the way I viewed myself' (2003, p490). This is a description of the identity shift I want to look for in researching the applicant's perspective of applying for headship. I want to see if they recognise a leadership identity shift within themselves and whether they feel this helps them in the recruitment process.

2.4.2 Recruitment Anticipation – Presenting the post

Blackmore, Thomson and Barty state, in their introduction to 'Principal Selection', that 'what is perhaps surprising is that the practices used to select these key players have not been subject to substantive interrogation by researchers or, until very recently, to major review by employers' (2006, p297). Part of the difficulty of appointing headteachers is that those selecting are looking for someone who primarily can be 'matched to the particular school and its current state and future direction' (Fidler and Atton, 2004, p111). As Fidler and Atton state very clearly, 'there is more to selecting for more senior positions than being good at the current job' (2004, p111). At the start of the recruitment process is a review of the headship post with a discussion, involving those with the responsibility of appointing, regarding what is needed for this specific role. There are two aspects involved in the description of the role, firstly this must be accurate to convey the post fairly. However, at a time when schools are still struggling to recruit headteachers, it also has to be attractive enough to encourage as wide a field as possible to apply. This is a chance for the school to reevaluate what they are wanting from the headteacher role, as Blackmore, Thomson and Barty, say whether 'schools are looking in a new direction; consolidation or moderate change' (2006, p310).

Some analysis has been carried out on the headship materials that are generated in anticipation of the recruitment. Kirkham looks at 'Values and Equity in Headteacher recruitment and selection (2000), Thomson (2009) looks at comparing and contrasting leadership and management expectation in advertisements and Foster (1996) analyses potential bias in the recruitment of primary headteachers. Kirkham analyses 165 state school headteacher advertisements across a five-month period in terms of their wording. Kirkham states that this sample represents 'approximately 5 per cent of the total number of secondary schools' at that time (2000, p19). Kirkham analyses the language into two groups, one that looks at the wording describing the institution and another group looks at the wording used to describe the 'professional characteristics required of the successful applicant' (2000, p19). This raises questions for me as to whether, almost 20 years later, the same kind of language is used in the job materials, particularly because I am curious as to whether all participants have the same

understanding of the language that is being used. I also wonder whether the perception of the headship packs has changed at all in the last 17 years and whether there are any more recent examples of this kind of analysis.

Thomson (2009) takes one week's worth of advertisements in the *Times Educational Supplement* and this produces 185 advertisements across a range of sectors and age groups. Thomson looks at what 'personal characteristics' (2009, p48) are named, rather than inferred, in the advertisement and also at 'what the head was expected to do' as outlined in the wording of the advertisement. Foster takes a different approach to focus very specifically on details from the press advertisement and from the person specification to establish common patterns of what is being looked for, for example, in terms of experience (1996, pp105ff).

Despite the use of person specifications in the headship recruitment pack, the idea that certain personality traits will lead to a better headship is less prevalent today. Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) suggest there is less evidence available on the significance of personal qualities in education. They do point to the work by Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) that suggests that effective leadership can have a direct positive impact on student learning. However, they do not suggest that leader efficacy is dependent upon a particular personality. Orchard argues that training relating to 'attributes of character that translate 'know-how' into a practice of integrity' should be part of the headship preparation (2002, p168). Orchard suggests that the any consideration of attributes of the individual are seen in terms of skills (2002, p163). Although, Orchard was writing in reference to the 'National Standards for Headteachers (DfEE, 2000), the issues are still pertinent today. Orchard raises the concern that 'While there is nothing wrong in highighting appropriate skills that might be needed by Headteachers, these in no way represent a full or sufficient account of the person' (2002, p163). Lumby and English go further still writing that 'leadership preparation should be an initiation into identity construction and subsequent performance, rather than solely aimed at the acquisition of managerial and technical knowledge and skills' (2009, p97). To what extent this is being fully addressed with the revised 'National standards for excellence for headteachers' (DfE, 2015), is questionable. These consist of four 'domains': 'Qualities and Knowledge', 'Pupils and

Staff', 'Systems and Process' and finally 'The self-improving school system' (DfE, 2015). Within the first domain there are references to few 'qualities' including optimism, 'integrity, creativity, resilience, and clarity' (2015, p5). What can be questioned at this stage is that the formal preparation of headship candidates, in terms of 'domains', shows little recognition for the developmental process that is going on in terms of leadership identity. Therefore, what is being missed, particularly if there is an emphasis on experience and the formal preparation, is what the potential leadership of an applicant can offer in comparison. Bush writes that 'teaching qualifications and experience are insufficient to prepare professionals for the demanding and very different role of principal' (2016, p537). This is something that I can investigate further; what evidence is there of any inclusion to the leadership identity journey in the recruitment process and what form does this take? MacBeath, Oduro, Jacka, and Hobby warn of the dangers of using generic descriptions as 'Headteachers who have been successful in one school may not be successful in another' (2006, p35). Certainly if identity language was found to be being used, for example, in the headship recruitment materials, I wonder whether a definition of identity has also been explored or whether terms such as this are being used without justification or explanation.

Although it is suggested that the headship recruitment materials are best way at this stage to identify what the recruiters are looking for in making this appointment, it is not entirely clear that this view is held as strongly by aspiring applicants. Studies have been carried out in the US and Hong Kong regarding the likely criteria expected for the appointment of principals (Kwan, 2011, Roza, et al., 2003, Rammer, 2007). Kwan creates four categories of criteria that are considered for principal appointments: 'Generic Managerial Skills; Communication and Presentation Skills; Knowledge and Experience; and Religious Value Orientation' (2011, p346). Of these it is interesting to note at this stage, one of Kwan's conclusions is that 'only Knowledge and Experience is directly related to teaching and learning and it is also the only criterion that can be more objectively assessed' (2011, p346). Do applicants feel a need to have acquired relevant knowledge and will they also feel that ultimately it is their experience that will be assessed for compatibility? This gives a basis for comparison with the way in which

the role is outlined in England or even if there is an acknowledgement of the subjectivity of various aspects of the process.

It is highly likely that it is hard to escape a preference given for relevant experience. What counts as relevant experience is open to debate amongst those reporting. There will be those who have had experience of headship either from a previous appointment, or those who have had to step into the post temporarily in an acting role. It is likely that these two categories of experience are given preference. As Blackmore, Thomson and Barty suggest 'what counts as experience is also subject to debate' (2006, p303). For example, it could be that recruiters equate experience as a deputy head with experience as headteacher, despite these being two very different roles within schools. Add into this the consideration of 'teacher leadership', does that then mean all applicants from within education have experience or is it about being given certain responsibilities within a school. This in itself seems highly contentious, and often lacks a clear definition of what is meant by leadership in this context. The implication appears to be that to be a good teacher is to be a good leader. This does not correlate with my own experience, where my understanding of my leadership identity is something I discovered increasingly throughout my career. Add into that that there is currently no direct mention of leadership or being a leader in the Teachers' Standards (Gov.uk, 2017), it seems almost too easy to be able to reference the notion of teacher leadership without further definition. Aspiring applicants may not agree with this sentiment. Certainly, Wenner and Campell (2017) cite Neumerski (2012) who says, 'there is little consensus around what constitutes 'teacher leadership' . . . it tends to be an umbrella term referring to a myriad of work' (2016, p135). Given the predominance of experience as an appointing criterion, I want to ask those involved directly about their perception of its relevance.

Some research indicates that the use of person specifications and job descriptions is a way of conveying specific criteria by which candidates are judged. For example, Foster outlines that person specifications are used to specify how much experience is needed for particular head posts. At times this is quite specific, 'in one case, the governors indicate in their person specification that they seek a minimum of 3 years' experience

as a headteacher or at least four years' experience as a deputy' (1996, p107). Alternatively the use of job descriptions and person specifications can be part of making the role as enticing as possible, given that potential applicants may need convincing that to apply, this would appear to be a good move (Gronn and Lacey, 2006).

2.5 Recruitment Actions

The appointment process is the meeting point, where the aspiring head comes together with those on the search for the 'best fit' for their school community. Ideally the process should be seen by all involved to be fair, effective and transparent. The process of identifying the 'best fit' of the leader for the post is not as simple as getting to know the candidate. The practice of recruiting headteachers is one that has its own processes, language, traditions, rules, activities and associated institutions. The appointment of a new headteacher involves interactions and shifts between different contexts, the shift from one school to another or the identity shift from middle leader to headteacher, for example. Bourdieu identifies different contexts with their own rules, interactions and traditions as 'Cultural Fields' (Webb et al., 2002, p22) and it is possible to see the rules and conventions that need to be observed to be part of that environment. In the appointment of a headteacher there is an exchange of cultural capital, but what is considered to be capital within that field is debated. For example, in some schools the preservation and continuation of traditions is essential, for others it is accepting the philosophical stance of the chain of schools. Recruitment itself involves shifts of power at different stages of the process, but with the overriding intention of the selectors to provide continuity and progress.

Walker and Kwan suggest that not enough work has been carried out into researching the 'strategies principal selection panels employ' (2012, p189). Definition and attraction form the basis of what is being investigated with the headship recruitment packs. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development state, 'all recruitment episodes should start with a job profile or person specification, stating the necessary and desirable criteria for selection', as referenced in MacBeath, Oduro, Jacka, and

Hobby's report (2006, p21). This definition of expectations brought together with the pressing need to ensure that the post is attractive is potentially evidenced in the recruitment packs.

Blackmore, Thomson and Barty identify five problems with the selection process (2006, p297):

(1) the dependence of selection panels on a written application;
(2) the dilemma of experience versus potential;
(3) the covert rule about the appointment of preferred applicants;
(4) the quandary of panel competency;
(5) the evidence of inconsistency of decisions.

I want to see what the applicants' perceptions are of the significance of the written application and this is something that can begin to be investigated by speaking with those considering applying for headship. The second of these points, 'the dilemma of experience versus potential' (2006, p297) seems to potentially connect to a changing identity. Is it ultimately about the work done up until this point or the applicant's ability to take on the new identity of headship given what is entailed in that, different, role. If one person has been a successful deputy head teacher does that mean that they will be a successful head? Or if a person has been a successful Head in one post does that mean that they will be successful in the next? Given the distinction with other senior leadership roles to headship and the variety of headship roles, it is worth remembering the significance of the Peter Principle (Peter and Hull, 1994) with this process. Are applicants successful because of previous experience rather than an evaluation of potential success in a future role. Perhaps they have been successful deputies, but that is where they should stay. Also of particular importance to my research are the last two, looking at panel competency and inconsistency of decision-making along with the applicant's perception of them, although all the issues are relevant to my study (see 2.4.1 and 2.5.1).

When the selection process was examined, by Morgan, Hall and Mackey, 30 years ago, a very different experience was recorded. They show that interviewers discussed selection criteria including accent, marital status, upbringing, political alignment and

religious affiliation (1983, p56). These aspects are good examples of the possession or not of appropriate cultural captial for these posts. However, even at that time, the aim of the work carried out by Morgan, Hall and Mackey (1983) was to improve consistency in the process. Consistency in questionning was needed, but also in terms of each step of the process including what the candidates were required to do at interview. Many changes regarding criteria of suitability have happened in recent years in order to aim for this process to stand up to scrutiny. Changes in employment law make it illegal to discriminate in the recruitment process on the basis of race, gender, age, religious beliefs, colour of skin, marital status, sexuality and disability. Given this history the selection and appointment of a new head should be without this discrimination.

One of the ways in which recruitment processes are sometimes claimed to be unfair are in terms of gender. Coleman refers to extensive surveys she carried out at the end of the 1990s (2007, p384), surveying issues such as the accessibility of women to leadership posts in education. Earley refers to an report commissioned by the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT) in 2010 that found that more men were applying for more leadership roles than women, before being appointed (2013, p39). The report also states that women are more likely to achieve promotion through an internal route, rather than an external move and that overall they apply for fewer leadership roles (2013, p40). Only one reason is given as a possible explanation, that women are hindered by child care restrictions (2013, p39). It seems a shame that that was the only reason considered. Instead, it seems possible that this could be a good example of the statistic often quoted from an internal Hewlett Packard report, 'women only apply for open jobs if they think they meet 100 percent of the criteria listed. Men apply if they think they meet 60 percent of the requirements' (Sandberg, 2015, p62). Women are far less likely to take a chance when applying for jobs (Harvard Business Review, 2014). In this setting I want to investigate as to whether there were any distinctions relating to why some teachers apply for jobs and others do not and whether gender makes a difference to this. What factors do they consider as they make the decision to apply for headteacher roles.

Jones' work (2008) reflects on the struggles that new heads experience, as they have to go through the internal construction of self, whilst other identities are thrust upon them from external groups, such as parents and teachers. Jones explores the notion of identity in terms of qualities, rather than roles. Jones gives examples of these such as 'the role model', 'the disciplinarian', 'Nurturer' (2008, pp694-697). With the difference in the definition of concepts, I question linking identity and traits, particularly given the understanding of identity in terms of self-perception, a view of oneself is an additional aspect of self-analysis, compared to a description of one's character.

Jones' (2008) focus on the identities within the role of male headteacher raises issues again regarding gender and leadership. Jones' findings suggest that men are more likely to construct identities associated with qualities such as self-confidence, power and authority, but other qualities, such as nurturer are harder to incorporate (2008). This links to perceptions of educational leadership, for example, Coleman (2007) suggests that leadership itself has been stereotypically associated with masculinity. Blackmore, Thomson and Barty suggest that 'Gender equity often means challenging gender identity, and equity policies can be very confronting to different modes of masculinity and femininity' (2006, p302). Ibarra, Wittman, Petriglieri and Day reference research that has identified leadership is often associated with masculinity 'decisive, assertive and independent' and they put forward that 'women are thought to be communal—friendly, unselfish, care-taking—and thus lacking in the qualities required for success in leadership roles' (2014, p292). Therefore challenging gender imbalance as part of the interview process is hopefully going beyond the use of inappropriate questions, but perhaps still remains at a deeper level in the underpinning perceptions of what leadership means according to gender.

Despite an increase in the number of women entering into teaching, Colemen argues that education is still an enviroment 'where men still are proportionately much more likely to achieve leadership status than are women' (2007, p384). In 2006, MacBeath, Oduro, Jacka, and Hobby write, in a report commissioned by the National College of School Leadership, *Leading Appointments*, that 'far fewer women than men applied for headship positions, especially at the secondary school level' (2006, p6). Behind this

Colemen reports that in the past there has been evidence of 'overt and covert discrimination against women at the time of appointment' (2007, p385). Although Coleman suggests that the examples become less overt over time, not least because of the changes to employment law already mentioned, discrimination is still felt to be there in 'a perception of a usually covert preference for male leaders, mainly on the part of governors in both primary and secondary schools' (2007, p387). This is something I was aware of as I begin to analyse data produced by my research.

Given the changes to the structure of interviewing, legal restrictions to discrimination in the workplace, is there still a perception of gender bias amongst applicants? If there is, what is the evidence for this perception and is it even possible to evidence what might be a perception of bias? There are interesting questions emerging from reading relating to perceived bias with certain models of leadership (Coleman, 2007, Trnavčevič and Roncelli Vaupot, 2009). Barsh writes that 'a McKinsey report found that men are often hired or promoted based on their potential, women for their experience and track record' (Genius, 2014). If women do demonstrate a strong leadership style in a predominantly male environment they 'are seen as competent but are less well liked than equally successful men' (Heilman et al., 2004, referenced in Ibarra et al., 2014, p293). Therefore women are often faced with a lose-lose situation, either perform competently in your work and not be liked or bring to the role a feminine type of leadership, but be seen as ineffective.

2.5.1 Recruitment Actions – the Application

There are two aspects of this stage firstly the engagement of the aspiring applicant and then this becomes a declaration of intent as soon as an application is put together. Straight away it seems that the transitioning role identity has the dual aspect of a sense of self, but also sense from others. It is the latter aspect that may prompt the primary aspect to make the move from an idea of potential leadership to an action of potential leadership. This movement links with Gronn and Lacey's idea of the 'positioning', which is described as 'period of identity work' (2004, p410). Even the ability to express intention, through completing an application form and writing an accompanying

statement of leadership, is a process of defining and formulating individual ideas that had not necessarily previously come together. Gronn and Lacey cite Normore, when he says that this is a time when there is 'an intricate process of reflection and learning that requires socialization into a new community of practice and role identity' (Normore, 2004, p109 cited Gronn and Lacey, 2004, p410).

The identity shift is one that appears to occur internally over time, but is influenced by key factors in the life of the aspiring teacher. It is often these areas that help turn an internal idea into something tangible for an application. Bisschoff and Mackenzie-Batterbury identify four significant areas of influence that provided these 'nurturing experiences' that of 'influential people; significant experiences; opportunities and rewards; impediments and challenges' (2013, p33). Bisschoff and Mackenzie-Batterbury (2013) rely upon Gronn (1999) for their structural framework of the career path of leaders. Based upon Gronn's understanding of 'three macro-contexts affecting a leader's career: historical, cultural and societal' (2003, p36). Therefore the sense of identity is one that is based in the years before work begins, when values are established through family, life events and interactions with significant people. Lord and Hall 'expect there to be a strong linkage between values and identities' (2005, p610), although they recognise that this is something that needs extensive attention to be developed, as experience grows. As mentioned above, perhaps a greater understanding of the relationship between these elements would help to write an application, particularly a supporting document, and allow the potential leader to be able to clarify the development of their own sense of identity self. Notman cites Crow and Scribner (2014) who suggest that identity should be seen as fully integrated with a person's values when they say, 'the technocratic trend that emphasizes skills and competencies and ignores values and beliefs and especially identities does not serve urban school leadership well' (Notman, 2017, p760). This may go some way to clarify what the role of the written application is and what the perception is of those who have to write them?

For the leadership-self to complete an application may involve certain hurdles to be overcome. What Browne-Ferrigno did identify was that the change that takes place is

'highly personal for participants' (2003, p491) and occurs at different times according to the experiences of the individual. Browne-Ferrigno refers (2003, p495) to three other papers (Crow and Glasock, 1995; Ortiz, 1982, Sigford, 1998) in her underlining of the significance for role-identity shift to take place for the aspiring principal to be able to make the transition. Many of Browne-Ferrigno's participants felt that their perception was insufficient on its own (2003, p481). For one woman her hesistency about her identity led to her feeling 'pulled in two directions: I want to succeed as a teacher and a soon-to-be-principal' (2003, p483). For her it was about the impossibility of straddling two identities rather than shifting from one to the other. For others it may be a sense of 'imposter syndrome' where 'high-performing individuals..find it difficult to accept their own competence' (Steward, 2014, p57). Again, there appears to be gender issues that might make the presentation of applicants, and their sense of leadership identity, different to each other. It would be interesting to see if there was any evidence of either of these hurdles being an issue for aspiring heads.

2.5.2 Recruitment Actions – Shortlisting

With an emphasis on safeguarding and other legal measures, teaching applications have changed significantly over the past ten years (DfE, 2014). Beyond the legal requirements, applications for headships often include common elements, a form to be filled in, which essentially is some kind of curriculum vitae. The application form is likely to include an educational history, qualifications, training and relevant experience, all of which combines to form potential criteria for shortlisting. This may or may not be accompanied by a supporting statement. Gronn and Lacey outline the different recruitment actions that are required in different regions of Australia, for example in Queensland one part of the application process is that teachers submit 'a 3,000-word statement which addresses the selection criteria' (2006, p107). I am unaware of this approach being used very often, if at all, in England.

As outlined above, the introduction of the National Professional Qualification for Headship in 1997 sought to explain the standards needed for professional headship. Within the qualification are three compulsory modules: 'Leading and Improving

Teaching', 'Leading an Effective School' and 'Succeeding in Headship' (DfE, 2014, updated 2015) that focus predominantly on what the head is expected to do rather than who the head is expected to be. Bourdieu uses the concept of 'misrecognition' in terms of a lack of full knowledge of what is happening within a particular situation, 'practices always hold double truths, which are difficult to hold together' (1998, p95). In this instance, it could be argued that this focus on standards appears to ensure that headteachers are able to cope with the demands of the job however, there is an underlying political agenda. Given Gronn's views on the NPQH as part of the new-managerialism (2003), this emphasis on standards could be masking another agenda, namely a narrow expectation of headship, constituting a common set of skills and standards. As already highlighted, Wildy, Pepper and Guanzhong raise the problem of focusing on standards as criteria for appointing Senior Leaders when they reviewed Australian recruitment procedures, as they feel that they were 'frequently weakened by fragmentation into a long list of duties' (2011, p279). This does not have to be the approach taken, for example, contrast this emphasis on skills and standards with the approach taken by the Ministry of Education in New Zealand, put forward in the Kiwi Leadership Framework for Principals (Notman, 2017). Notman reports here 'the importance of self in successful school leadership is encapsulated by the dual concepts of *manaakitanga* (leading with moral purpose) and *pono* (having self-belief)' (2017, p768).

This stage is characterized by the process of shortlisting the candidates. This can be done a number of ways, for example Grummell, Devine and Lynch, state that in the Irish system 'once candidates were shortlisted on the basis of their written application, they [then] had to present themselves as potential leaders in the interviews (2009, p341). If, as Bush suggests, a 'shortlist of applicants is drawn up, ostensibly on the basis of a 'fit' between the candidates' qualifications and experience, and the job criteria' (2013, p63) then those with potential leadership identity are immediately disadvantaged to those with specific leadership experience. This is made even more so the case if the job criteria themselves have shifted in nature from a focus on character, vision and values to responsibility. It is possible that use of criteria in England has increased significantly given the need to be able to justify decisions that are made

legally and it would be interesting to note if this is the case and whether this has had any impact on the process itself.

Blackmore, Thomson and Barty's five problems with the selection process (2006, p297) have two that are particularly associated with this shortlisting stage, firstly, the dependence of selection panels on a written application and secondly, the dilemma of experience versus potential. Their study questions the usefulness of the written application as a way to distinguish candidates, measuring instead the candidate's ability to communicate effectively (2006, p303). One participant in their study also questioned its usefulness with regard to the recruiters 'I've seen some very good applications not get shortlisted because the panel has failed to read in a sophisticated and intelligent way' (2006, p303). MacBeath, Oduro, Jacka, and Hobby cite Middlewood and Lumby (1998), in stressing the need for objectivity in shortlisting as they suggest it is easy for a governing body, for example, to be swayed by subjective preferences (2006, p23). Interestingly Blackmore, Thomson and Barty suggest that perhaps when considering the written statement 'the real problem was not in writing, but rather in the reading process' (2006, p303). Whilst the instructions for any written statement may superficially appear to be clear they could still be interpreted in a number of ways and of course could be perceived through a subjective perspective. There appears to be problems here if as an applicant you are a confident, eloquent writer, because the subtleties of your application could be missed. Alternatively, if you struggle with writing you could also be disadvantaged in that your application could be considered sub standard. If this is the case, then what function is a written application actually fulfilling in the process?

Respondents in Gronn and Lacey's research are equally cautious about the shortlisting process, recognising that applications can be rejected pre-shortlist without the same need to justfy selection choices. One participant questioned, 'Is it just to make up the numbers so that they are seen to have followed the process?' (2006, p112). Certainly there have been questions about recruitment companies use of long listing candidates to bulk up numbers without any intention of these people going through to interview. This is something that I am investigating with regard to participants' experiences.

In Walker and Kwan's study of principal recruitment in Hong Kong (2012) they find that there is some disagreement amongst the supervisors involved in appointing. Some believe that selection discussions are 'in depth' and no decisions are made unless by a consensus (2012, p199). However, other supervisors say that 'decisions about short-listing and appointment were normally made by a minority and that broad agreement was certainly not the norm' (2012, p199). MacBeath, Oduro, Jacka, and Hobby reinforce this part of the process as problematic, saying that 'subjectivity can mar the process of shortlisting and selection' (2006, p23). They go on to cite Middlewood and Lumby (1998) to explain why this might be the case, 'One selector may be in favour of one candidate because he or she has a particular qualification rather than another. Alternatively, too much weight may be given altogether to academic achievement at the expense of other qualities which might be more relevant to effective performance on the job' (Middlewood and Lumby, 1998, p6 cited in MacBeath et al., 2006, p23). This potential bias exists despite legislation in the UK to ensure fairness and equality in the recruitment process, including the Equality Act (Gov.uk, 2010). However, this could be being done positively in an attempt to target certain groups within society, for example according to gender or race, to encourage them to apply.

Certainly this stage appears to bring together the two pathways when, I believe, each is at their weakest. Firstly the applicant is in the process of changing identities, finding ways to communicate their potential leadership identity and secondly there is the subjectivity of a shortlisting process, possibly based on a set of criteria, but not necessarily, possibly being carried out by those appointing, but not necessarily. Walker and Kwan write that they 'uncovered little direct evidence of the criteria used before the interview' (2012, p201) in relation to shortlisting, but that the shortlisting process took 'a number of sources or factors into account' (2012, p201) and that they are aware that those involved in recruiting are 'collecting additional information "informally" about the candidates' (2012, p201). If information is being gathered or even exchanged informally then this is not subject to the same transparency or criteria as, for example, the panel interview.

I want to consider whether there are alternatives ways of approaching the selection of candidates. Certainly there are alternative methods being used, particularly in other countries. Browne-Ferrigno (2002) reviews different US recruitment processes that contrast with most English practices, for example, principal applications 'moved away from candidate self-selection and emphasis on academic potential' (2002, p11) to 'nominations' from local leaders 'based upon leadership potential' (2002, p11). Nominations go beyond references and involve leaders sponsoring an individual's application. This is an interesting possibility and could link with the development of the way in which mentors could be used within Education. This may be one way in which Education should look at other institutions regarding its employment processes for ways in which the whole approach can be improved. Certain districts in the US include 'essays on leadership and values' as part of the application, although this raises questions in the same way the supporting statement already has. Browne-Ferrigno discusses criteria related to years of classroom experience (2002, pp14ff). This prompts an interesting comparison given there are no specific criteria necessarily considered for this in England, although individual schools might decide that this is the case, and headteachers can be appointed from outside of education. Fidler (1992) suggests that the recruitment stage of looking for a new head is initially about 'identifying the field of candidates who could do the job' (Cited in Fidler and Atton, 2004, p112). The recruitment stage should hopefully be about breadth of possibility before shortlisting becomes about the impact of reality. Rather interestingly Fidler (1992) suggests that the selection process is then about 'selecting from this group the one who the governing body feel that they can best work with' (2004, p112). Perhaps this is a surprising focus for the selection activities, whether this matches the experience of recruiters today will be seen.

2.6 Shift in Power

Bourdieu identifies different contexts with their own rules, interactions and traditions as 'Cultural Fields' (Webb et al., 2002, p22). It is possible to see the rules and conventions needed to be observed to be part of this recruitment environment. Bourdieu examines the relationship between 'people's practices and the contexts in

which those practices occur' (2002, p21). The recruitment process involves an exchange of power at this stage. Initially it is the applicant that made the decisions; should I apply for this job? From this point onwards the power shifts to those appointing; who is the right person for this role? Gronn and Lacey raise the 'tension between the conflicting imperatives of universalism (merit) and particularism (suitability) in recruitment selection systems' (2006, p116). They suggest that with the sense of risk that is involved in appointing, it is not surprising that those doing the selecting are likely to go with something akin to what they know, what they refer to as 'cloning'. A alternative way of appointing through succession planning can be seen as a formalised version of this, where the power is firmly with the selectors throughout (see 2.1.1). I want to see if there is evidence of this shift of power from my interviews with the applicants. An example of this could be the wooing of candidates to consider applying by an external recruitment company, but when that applicant is rejected at the shortlisting stage little feedback is given and minimal contact from that point on.

2.7 Selection Activities

If recruitment is about reviewing the post and making the post attractive and encouraging potential leaders to apply, then the selection process is about choosing the best candidate for the post. The most common elements of a headship selection day would include a review of references, an interview, most likely a panel interview, a presentation, although the criteria for this has changed significantly in recent times, a tour of the school, potentially involving some kind of interview at the same time, in-tray exercises perhaps relating to finances, leadership, prioritizing and challenges. Additional activities might include a group activity or discussion with the other candidates, observation of a lesson with feedback, problem-solving questions, meetings with parents and/or pupils, and some schools opt for some form of psychometric testing, sometimes referred to as an occupational personality questionnaire. Alternatively some processes might choose to make use of assessment centres. Advice given in the document 'Recruiting headteachers and senior leaders' (2006), published by the National College of School Leadership, describes the work of assessment centres in that they 'create an evidence-based profile of your candidates by

using multiple different assessment techniques' (2006, p59). At present, specific routes into leadership, for example, Teach First and Future Leaders, most actively use assessment centres, although business selection processes also regularly use them. Successful selection is not possible without thorough recruitment and this may be a key factor in why so many posts have to be re-advertised when no successful appointment has been made.

Herriot (2002) suggests that there are three key factors to selection that show it is a two-way process, what he describes as a 'social process' rather than one where one side is active and the other is passive. Firstly, there is a sense that both sides are assessing the other, rather than one way. Secondly, Herriot suggests that the selection process is the beginning of the working relationship 'rather than as the hurdle which has to be jumped before that relationship can commence' (2002, p385). Finally he argues that it is a process that either side can choose to exit at any time. This model of selection as a social process fits well with the conceptual model adapted for this research, which continues to show the recruitment process as two parallel pathways interacting with each other at each point. This is still the case even if the shift in power has taken place. In what sense the interview process is perceived as being social is something that can be investigated further.

Talking of the Irish education system, Grummell, Devine and Lynch state that 'the selection process is crucial, as it is at this stage that the definition of a leader is constructed by selection boards and, in turn, interpreted and embodied by candidates as they present themselves as potential leaders (2009, p330). I want to investigate further the notion that the selection process works well for particular types of candidates, or is it instead as Blackmore, Thomson and Barty suggest that average selection processes result in 'particular kinds of people being successful' (2006, p297). For example, do those that are confident writers perform better with their application letters. Are those that are good at making presentations have an unfair advantage or is that seen as an essential quality? Although these skills may be useful for the role they are not the only aspects that are important. Even if that is not the case is there the perception that this is the case?

2.7.1 Selection Activities – Selection Process

Some time ago the headship recruitment and selection process in England was reviewed in depth, (Morgan et al., 1983) and the findings of this study are compared and referenced internationally (Walter and Kwan, 2012; Blackmore et al., 2006; Wildy et al., 2011). This research continues to be a point of reference for more recent work in England also, for example, Fidler and Atton reference Morgan, Hall and Mackey (1983) when reporting on research findings relating to the appointment of heads. They say 'the research of Morgan, Hall and Mackey led to improvements in the selection process, but we do not know how far those operate 20 years later' (2004, p112). Over ten years later still, there are many elements of the selection process that have still not changed since then; these include long listing, shortlisting, the written application, the panel interview and references. Interestingly comparisons are made in this study, over 30 years ago, to show that education was not in line with the NHS, the recruitment of senior Police posts and the Home Office in its focus on interviews as a way to appoint.

Ideally, the external scrutiny of potential identity could be integrated with the selection process activities. The interview or panel interview is usually central to the selection process. The interview can be a few representatives or with an entire governing body. There may be additional interviewers such as teachers, parents and external consultants. There seems to be a mixed response in the existing literature as to whether this is a fair part of the process. Certainly different papers reference the need or expectation for those interviewing to have undergone training themselves for the experience, given the wide range of skills needed for it to be done well (Blackmore et al., 2006). Different reasons have been given for why the interview is not as fair as it could be. Walker and Kwan interviewed 'aspiring and newly appointed principals' in Hong Kong and they found that there 'was a general feeling that the panel had already targeted the person they wanted to employ before the interview and that they were only invited to participate to fulfill legal requirements and give the appearance of "fairness"'(2012, p199). Whether it is even possible to identify potential leadership attributes and if so, how, was trialled in one way by Tomlinson and Holmes with

Primary Head appointments (2001), using a 'Gallup model' of a series of in-depth interviews (2001, p113). They highlight the need for balanced selection interviews, 'tight' enough for it to be consistent and 'reliable' whilst sufficiently open to allow for 'personal idiosyncrasies of expression' (2001, p113). At a time when questioning is likely to be identical, candidate to candidate, to ensure consistency and fairness, the scope for any individuality could only really occur through the use of follow up questioning. Blackmore, Thomson and Barty also raise the situation that even if interviews are working from very specific criteria it is very easy for their subsequent discussions to 'slide into a discussion of unrelated matters' (2006, p306).

It is argued that England has greater freedoms than other countries in that selection panels use other appointment practices (MacBeath et al., 2006). Is it then worth asking what is being done with that freedom. My research therefore needs to evaluate a number of these activities and in particular how they are perceived by applicants. Kwan and Walker (2009) look at certain skills, how they might be measured during selection and how these are perceived by those applying. For example, when considering 'communication and presentation skills' (2009, p58) they find that the applicants feel these are more important even than those appointing. Therefore already there can be seen to be a mismatch of expectations as to what is important to the appointment process.

Concerns have been previously raised regarding the confidence to which you can say that the interview process is fair. It is hoped that the days of open discrimination in terms of questioning are now less common. Coleman's research shows that half of her participants in 2004 experienced discrimination with their experience of 'interviewing panels [that] showed concern that domestic responsibilities might impact on their ability to do their job' (2007, p387). However, it is worthwhile noting that Kwan and Walker suggest that it is the applicant who is more likely to see the panel interview as an important 'performance' demonstrating their ability, compared to the selectors themselves (2009, p59). I will be able to compare this with my findings. Browne-Ferrigno (2002) references research carried out by Crow and Glascock (1995) that reviews 'rarely used strategies' used to recruit 'women and minorities'. Interestingly,

this includes the 'process requiring nominees to reflect on career history, experiences as a teacher/learner, and vision of leadership' (2002, p17). Other strategies mentioned, not commonly part of English recruitment, include videotaped group activities and interviews with only independent unaffiliated experts who have viewed the videos and read the applications. This can be seen as similar to some practices at the assessment centres (NCSL, 2006). I want to see whether applicants consider alternative methods or see any value in some of these approaches.

2.7.2 Selection Activities – Communicating Identity

I want to investigate further difficulties applicants encounter when presenting their leadership-identity at interview. Thomson puts forward that this is possibly a 'risky assumption' (2009, p35) that 'potential leaders can be identified'. Thomson suggests that 'despite the lack of debate about what constitutes 'leadership potential' the succession literature does assume that it is possible to recognise it' (2009, p35). Thomson argues that whether applicants are able to present their potential is dependent on the context they find themselves in at the time (2009) and this context is what is likely to mean you will be encouraged by others to go for leadership roles. However, I have already seen that some candidates are more likely to put themselves forward or to consider others' recommendations than others, so would this criteria be useful for all? The significance of the applicant's context, and those they are working with, regarding their leadership journey, is one aspect that I am investigating and questioning. Issues of gender stereotyping can also be considered here, in terms of confidence to take on that identity shift. There is also the consideration of any evidence suggesting bias according to the applicant's perceptions. Gronn and Lacey write that 'It is in this interview room that aspirants become aware of all manner of biases in the minds of selectors' (2006, p112).

How should the applicants then present themselves in the interview room? It will be interesting to see if applicants have a sense of what it means to be themselves in the interview room. Ibarra talks about the importance of being true to self as an aspect of being authentic, but notes that it is worth considering which self that means – past,

present or future (2017)? Blackmore, Thomson and Barty suggest that 'principal applicants generally needed to present a 'normal identity' in order to succeed in selection' (2006, p307). What is meant by 'normal identity'? This is generally taken to mean that they put themselves forward as a safe candidate. For Blackmore, Thomson and Barty 'normal identity' means 'someone with whom they feel comfortable' (2006, p307) and that panel members show 'a marked preference for applicants with a humble predisposition, people who were mild, if not meek in behaviour' (2006, p307). Interestingly, Blackmore, Thomson and Barty note that sometimes there appears to be evidence of 'strong anti-intellectualism' with some panels, for example where one candidate that has studied at post-graduate level 'quickly alienated a number of panel members with his sophisticated use of language' (2006, p307). Despite apparent agreed criteria, certain qualities seem to play against candidates, for example an applicant talking about their academic studies, or 'applicants showing vitality and a sense of robust humour were not as well liked' (2006, p307). Of course many of these issues are entirely dependent upon whom the members of the panel are. These are tangible ways that can be a feature of the data generated to look at this in more detail.

2.8 Selection Achievement

I am investigating whether there is any evidence of more innovative approaches to the selection process, as well as looking at views on the range of existing activities, from those involved. For example, the use of performance tasks or in-tray exercises can vary widely in their content and focus. Although it is interesting to note that over ten years ago this was written of potential leadership activities, 'some of these, such as in-tray exercises, have become a little hackneyed but the value of seeing candidates in simulated situations should not be underestimated' (Fidler and Atton, 2004, p118). The applicants' opportunity to convey their potential leadership identity may be more or less possible with some of these additional activities compared to the interview where the interviewee's possible emphasis on experience may dominate.

2.8.1 Selection Achievement – Agreeing and appointing

The final stage is one where those selecting have to complete the circle of recruitment by agreeing upon the best fit for their appointment. The process is not always successful because it can be that agreement cannot be reached or that there appears to be no best fit option available to them. The process then has to begin again. Faced with the decision of who to appoint, the hope of making the right decision rests upon consistency, fairness and agreement amongst those doing the recruitment. Again it is worth noting that Walker and Kwan suggest that not enough work has been carried out into researching the 'strategies principal selection panels employ' (2012, p189). In England and abroad, the use of an interview to make the appointment still stands as the most common selection activity. Palmer and Fresno (2016) carried out a study on 125 school district administrators asking them which selection activities they used to appoint principles. Of those 125, 113 indicate that they use interviews (2016, p12). This was followed by requesting a resume (111 out of 125) and references (108 out of 125) (2016, p12). Wildy, Pepper and Guanzhong (2011, p278) note of Hunter and Hunter's research (1984) that even with training, consensus of panel members at interview is not found to be useful material for data, in that it is no different from random. Gunter cites Kirkham suggesting that 'hunch and amateurism continues' with regard to selection processes (2001, p79). As already noted, recruiters can use other appointment practices along with interviews to enable the decision making to be as informed as possible, including in-tray exercises and psychometric testing (MacBeath et al., 2006). Palmer and Fresno also mention the use of a written statement, a presentation, performance tasks and a visit to the applicant's school (2016, p12).

There are still good reasons to raise issues of fairness when it comes to the selection process. One of the most reported ways in which recruitment processes of English headteachers are sometimes claimed to be unfair is in terms of gender. Smith writes about the fusing of toughness with caring in leadership identities for women (2011, p531). This suggests that not only is there a need for applicants to evaluate their journey in terms of their leadership identity, but that if the applicant is a woman she is presented with expectations as to what form that identity should take according to

gender. Perhaps this makes it harder for the applicant to feel free to express their true, authentic leadership-identity.

Bourdieu uses the term cultural arbitrary (1990) to refer to the way in which political agendas can be held as the best practice for the school and those that do not fit with this view do not fit with the school. It can be argued that the appointing body of the school takes on the neutral gaze in determining what is right for the school in terms of a new Head. Perhaps this correlates to what Blackmore, Thomson and Barty refer to as 'normalised principal identities', which they say is 'at odds with equity and diversity policies and…innovative practice' (2006, p299). It is hard to question in terms of overt or covert discrimination as the recruiting body are the dominant power. English and Bolton suggest that the 'adoption of a specific cultural game in a school is a form of value adjudication, a determination beyond any serious questioning' (2016, p35).

Blackmore, Thomson and Barty write that the challenge of coming to an agreement can shed light on the efficacy of the whole process, 'The inconsistency in decisions made by selection panels was arguably facilitated by the lack of rigour in the process' (2006, p308). Grummell, Devine and Lynch highlight that now candidates are able to access data about their interviews, the approach needs to be uniform and available, however they recognise the difficulties that this might raise. They suggest whilst it is good that interview data is 'more transparent and quantifiable', it also means that there might be 'potential difficulties in terms of how assessors interpreted criteria and subjectively assessed the authenticity of candidates' performance' (2009, p343).

Different research suggests that some applicants are more optimistic than others about the decision-making process (Blackmore et al., 2006, Smith, 2011, Gronn and Lacey, 2004). One outcome recognized by Blackmore, Thomson and Barty is that the whole process will become increasingly off-putting for certain applicants. Referring to their context, in two Australian states, they stated, 'We suspect that the pool of principal applicants becomes highly self selecting, with only those willing to fit into preferred models, in one district or another, remaining in the application game' (2006, p309). Gronn and Lacey also consider a similar situation when looking at the experiences of a group of aspirants, considering that approaches to selection indicate 'a way of seeking

to guarantee that new appointees fit a preferred mould, or are deemed able to be moulded' (2006, p102). It has already been stated that Blackmore, Thomson and Barty note this saying that 'the selection process amounts to a reproductive technology which, in the quest for certainty and safety, results in particular kinds of people being successful' (2006, p297).

Gronn and Lacey question the emphasis on the outcome of selection to be about finding the best fit between the expectations of the school or system and those held by the candidates (2006). If this is one of the determining factors in final selection and acceptance then there is potentially the danger that this too will result in a 'cloning' outcome that means the successful applicant is a reproduction of what is already there. Palmer, Kelly and Mullooly (2016) examine further notions of best 'fit', where they question the use of this as a goal as it ultimately ends up raising issues of exclusion and discrimination. Palmer, Kelly and Mullooly suggest that '*Fit* also works heavily against merit within principal selection' (2016, p29) in that it suggests that fitting in is more important than other aspects of headship. They investigated further what those recruiting understood by their use of the word 'fit'. There were different responses including meeting the criteria, as 'congruence' in achieving a match between the candidate and the community, as an expectation of certain 'character traits', and as 'understanding' the school (2016, p34). The implication of this could be that it is safe to use the phrase 'best fit' and yet it could be used to mask a number of different agendas. Despite primarily writing about their own Australian context, Blackmore Thomson and Barty (2006) do reference the contrasting selection process in the UK, highlighting the differences in procedure. They suggest that there are 'familiar anecdotal concerns raised about the 'cloning' effect of selection, the apparent tendency for local panels to seek out an outsider, a particular kind of 'super-head' to manage the audited and inspected improvement process' (2006, p313). This suggests that despite an entirely different framework the process of recruiting these significant educational leaders is still a challenge and open to human inconsistency. Is this what applicants think is happening as part of the process? Do they feel that certain decisions are made even before the process begins?

2.8.2 Selection Achievement – Confirmation and letting go

The applicant is often asked in the final stages as to whether they are still interested in the post, checking their intentions. It is at this point that their potential leadership identity is tested and possibly affirmed. If the applicant is offered the post then it still could be that for this fit to be successful there may be some negotiation regarding the terms or structure of the post. MacBeath, Oduro, Jacka, and Hobby list ten different areas of potential negotiation including salary, time, the relationship between leading and managing, levels of independence, and work-life balance (2006, p27). How rigidly the expectations are for the successful applicant to fit the mould provided, may still prove to be a hurdle to appointing. However, it is at this point that there is a need to commit to the identity change (Ibarra, 2016).

Given that the process of applying for headships is likely to take part over a longer time framework, the opportunity of feedback becomes increasingly important, not least in continuing to foster leadership in others. This does not always happen, but I want to see if it is a significant factor for those that I interview who are going through or have gone through the process. As Fidler and Atton suggest, feedback that is not evident from the application form is likely to irritate 'many candidates' (2004, p120). More importantly, poor feedback 'really indicates that the selection process has not been conducted efficiently or that the feedback is not authentic' (2004, p120). This can prompt a certain set of emotions in the applicant, Gronn and Lacey, in the study of those applying for headship, note that 'aspirants become alerted to the possibility that, in the event of lack of success, they may not be able to realize their ideal sense of self' (2004, p416). Again this can be an example of the possibility of either positive or negative spirals reinforcing or diminishing an individual's sense of leadership identity (Day et al., 2009).

With the confirmation of identity upon appointment, the identity changes from being primarily an individually held belief to one socially and collectively recognized (Lord and Hall, 2005). Lord and Hall map the journey of the leadership self from novice to a more sophisticated and complex leadership identity, taking into account social relationships.

For example, upon appointment a leader can, for the first instance, acquire followers (2005, p592). Again, this could be something that could be developed further with regard to a different sense of criteria, not looking at experience, but in this instance looking at development of leadership identity. Lumby and English write that 'group identity and individual identity overlap, creating a mutually understood world of signs, symbols and stories' (2009, p103). This also marks the point of letting go from previous identities, something, which is controversial in itself if the Head is seen to be distant from classroom practice. Browne-Ferrigno's work with aspiring principals acknowledges this potential challenge of moving from one identity to another, one participant said, 'No, I don't think of myself as a teacher as much anymore. But, you know, there's a part of me saying goodbye to that. And that's a little bit sad' (2003, p490). Sigford (1998) goes as far as exploring the importance of acknowledging identity grief for the loss of the previous role. This implies the need to let go of the previous identity in order to embrace the new one. As already mentioned it can be that conflicting identities hampers identity transition (Ibarra, 2017). This of course raises interesting questions for those headteachers who feel that it is essential to continue to teach, are there a range of motivations that might underpin this?

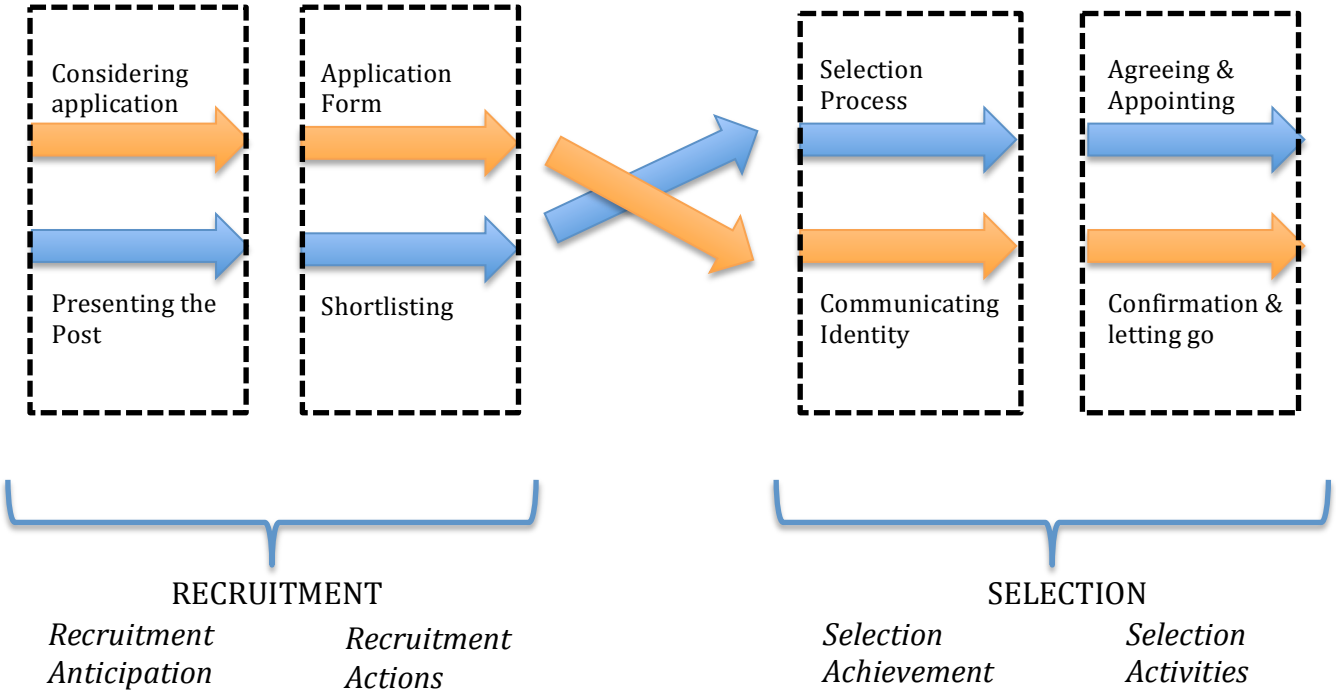
2.9 Summary and Implications for the Research Questions from the Literature Review

The literature review has raised a number of questions that need further investigation, particularly in an English context, given that many of the references are from other countries. Having reviewed the literature in relation to the stages of the recruitment process, I am able to go back to my initial questions and my conceptual framework to see if any changes need to be made.

Following the construction of my conceptual modeling of the recruitment and selection process and in light of my literature review, I have refined the model (Figure 2.2, p20) to take account of the different stages and their associated actions (Figure 2.3). I have now developed the initial model further still by distinguishing the four stages of the process to be Recruitment Anticipation, Recruitment Actions, Selection Activities and

Selection Achievement. Now that the conceptual framework has been refined I am able to revise the research questions to reflect the different stages of the process.

Figure 2.3 *Enhanced diagram of Four Stage Process of Leadership Development matched against headship recruitment*



Looking at these distinct sections, I am able to see that my existing research questions are not matched in a balanced way to the process that I am investigating. There are areas of interest that have arisen from the literature review, that are not being questioned and, without losing the overall focus, I recognize that the questions need to evolve further. Also the scope of my questions at the end of Year One were too broad and so I need to make sure that they are focused enough for the research to be useful and targeted. These are the outstanding questions and issues at this point that need to be addressed and refined into a revised set of Research Questions:

- It was anticipated that to consider going for headship there would be some kind of internal change in terms of identity, but whether all applicants actually have a sense of this is unclear
- Do applicants have an opportunity to reflect upon their own changing identity?

- Are there common triggers that cause applicants to consider this change of role?
- I had considered the headship application materials as being significant, but is this necessarily the case?
- There appears to be a sense that what is being looked for in a headship role has changed, but does the accompanying material actually indicate that?
- Do applicants perceive there to be a fair way to apply for a job that does not disadvantage somebody somewhere?
- Does the applicant believe that experience will always outweigh potential leadership identity?
- Do applicants believe that gender differences still have an impact?
- What do applicants believe are the most effective methods to enable candidates to share their potential?
- Do applicants believe that the process is fair?
- Do any applicants think that you are more likely to be successful if you adopt a particular approach at selection?

Therefore I have revised the research questions in light of the findings from the literature review (Table 2.1, p61). Now that the conceptual framework has been refined I am able to revise the research questions to reflect the different stages of the process.

The research questions have been become more targeted to reflect the focus of the research on the applicants' perception of the recruitment process, with the thread of headship identity running through. The final version of the research questions, in their simplified form, helps to underpin the methodological choices including the design of the interview framework for the follow-up interviews with some of the applicants. The questions also reflect the two aspects of the recruitment and selection process. These research questions allow for the research to follow these two aspects, firstly an investigation into the research process itself, which includes communication connected to the role, the shortlisting process and activities involved in the selection. Secondly, the questions look at the applicants' journey and consider the ways in which the applicants see themselves as potential leaders and how they view the process. From reviewing the whole process it is clear that there are distinct implications for the methodology; for the research paradigm that forms the foundations of this research and for the potential research design choices that needed to be made. The final rows

start to set out the way in which these questions can be answered in terms of methodology as it has become clear that it is not possible to answer all the questions via one method.

Table 2.1: *Four stages against methodology choices and research questions*

<table>
<tr><th></th><th>Stage 1: Recruitment Anticipation</th><th>Stage 2: Recruitment Actions</th><th>Stage 3: Selection Activities</th><th>Stage 4: Selection Achievement</th></tr>
<tr><td>Applicant</td><td>Considering application</td><td>Writing an application</td><td>Communicating Identity</td><td>Confirmation & Letting go</td></tr>
<tr><td>Process</td><td>Presenting the Post</td><td>Shortlisting</td><td>Selection Process</td><td>Agreement & Appointment</td></tr>
<tr><td>Stage of Identity investigation</td><td>Reflection & Construction</td><td>Matched and/or potential matching</td><td>Identity explored & communicated</td><td>Endorsement of leadership identity</td></tr>
<tr><td>Initial Research Questions at end of Year one</td><td>How significant is the individual identity of the applicant?
Is there any acknowledgement of an identity shift as part of the recruitment process? What is the perception of the process by those involved directly in it?</td><td>What role do person and job specifications actually play in recruitment of Heads? Are there particular experiences, personality traits or leadership styles that are specifically seen to be beneficial for the role of Head? Does the shift to a standards/accountability model of headship manifest itself in the recruitment process?</td><td>What exactly is being looked for when recruiting a new Head and has this changed?
To what extent have preparation courses shaped what is being looked for in recruiting Heads in England? Are the recruitment processes consistent and fair? How is this demonstrated?</td><td>What steps are taken to ensure the best outcome of the selection process?
Are there any perceived differences in the processes relating to gender? Is there a place for a personal educational vision in headship?</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">Distilled version of Research Questions</td><td colspan="2">How is the role presented</td><td colspan="2" rowspan="2">Do current recruitment processes allow a fair identification of transition?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">What perception of headship can we take from the documentation?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">What can be established about the relationship between the identity of headteachers and the process of recruiting them?</td></tr>
<tr><td>Final version of Research Questions</td><td>How do applicants perceive the role of headteacher presented in the recruitment process & what perception of headship can we take from this?</td><td>Do applicants think that current recruitment processes allow for a fair opportunity for them to present their potential leadership identity?</td><td colspan="2">What opportunities should exist to allow aspiring applicants to develop their sense of leadership identity?</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Methodology for investigation</td><td colspan="4">Analysis of potential applicants via online questionnaire & application documentation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="4">Interviews with Applicants & Successful Appointees</td></tr>
</table>

3. Chapter Three: Methodology

I believe that the journey of establishing my research position stems from a shift in my own perspective, through the experiences I encountered when applying for leadership positions. When I started out as a newly qualified teacher I applied for jobs with the belief that if I was the best candidate for the post then I would be successful. If I was not successful they it could quite simply be explained by the existence of someone better. This could be better in terms of subject specialism or previous experience with the examination papers. Whether this was true or not, at the time this seemed to be something entirely measurable and quantifiable. This could suggest that the recruitment of a particular post could be part of a positivist worldview. Positivists believe that the external world can be measured and known as an external reality and in line with this observers are able to have an objective view of that reality.

It was not until I began to apply for subject leadership posts that I felt that other factors were now starting to affect success, or otherwise, with applications. What became evident was that suitability was now much more relevant, it didn't feel like it was a matter of being the best teacher anymore, whatever criteria that meant. It now became something to do with compatibility. When applying for senior leadership posts this became the predominant message, do you fit with what they are looking for? With this came a certain degree of trust, trust that the school would communicate what was being looked for with this post and trust that I would have the opportunity to communicate my potential for that post in the recruitment process. Initially my view of the world had suggested to me that there was a tangible reality of the leadership position that was the focus of the recruitment process and also of my application. In going through this process in reality, it made me raise questions regarding the possibility of the objective nature of this leadership post. How could the applicant really know what was being looked for? Is it possible to appoint in an objective way? How does the applicant know that they will have the opportunity to fully communicate their belief that they fulfill what is being looked for? The recruitment process itself was so crucial in appointing a new Head for an organization and yet it appeared to rest upon the successful communication of entirely subjective views. If the process is subjective then that means an investigation into that position also needs to take

account of this way of viewing the process. It is the examination of these issues that determines which research choices will be appropriate and this will determine the overall research design needed.

3.1 Research Paradigm

My own experience in schools has caused me to see that there are alternative ways of viewing and evaluating leadership in education. The recruitment process, with its various stages and activities could easily be seen as a scientific process to be followed, an empirical experiment with a number of different hypotheses to be tested and the collection of data through observational testing. The very existence of criteria suggests that the observation of the applicant is something that can be tested in an objective way. As indicated already, it would be understandable to see how this would mean that to investigate this process you would be operating within a Positivist Framework.

Positivism is often associated with the philosopher Comte, with his emphasis on 'observation and reason as a means of understanding behaviour; explanation proceeds by way of scientific description' (Cohen et al., 2011, p7). This theory of knowledge understands that what can be known can be established from what can be observed. If something is unclear then more information needs to be gathered then it can be understood more fully. Buckler and Walliman explain that Positivism rests upon key assumptions. These include that there is order within the world and therefore has the potential to be understandable, also that we all share the same external reality and that 'human intellect and perceptions are reliable' (2016, p146).

However, in going through the different layers of recruitment at different stages of career, I have begun to question that the process of recruiting leaders can be seen in positivist terms. Based upon my own experience I have already begun to challenge the view of leadership as something objective and, in establishing my research position, I am beginning to consider that the role of the Head is instead constructed from a layering of perceptions. There are too many experiences of entirely conflicting perspectives of what appears to be the same headteacher role. I begin to question therefore that there is an external reality that is being perceived with regard to

leadership. Human behaviour, particularly within the experience of recruiting headteachers seems far from ordered and objective; instead it is far more complex than that. Having been a part of that process in the past, it is important to also acknowledge that my experience is likely to influence my interpretation of the process. Given my participation in this research process this also means that I need to be aware of my position and my values as aspects that I bring to the research itself. This places me fully within the position of an insider role. However, it is important to establish that this does not prohibit that the process being fair. This too might steer some critical decisions regarding the selection and shape of the research methodology. In fact given the highly sensitive and emotional involvement in the appointing of headteachers, fairness is extremely important and this will be explored further in the section on Ethics (see 3.9). Therefore I need to consider that my research paradigm is interpretivist rather than positivist.

Thomas explains that the interpretivist thinks that 'the world…is not straightforwardly perceivable because it is *constructed* by each of us in a different way' (2013, p108). My view of the leadership role as socially constructed from different perceptions means that my research paradigm is in line with this interpretivist position. A consequence of this is that one aspect of the research attempts to understand the human behaviours that form part of these interactions and doing this by researching the views of people involved in the recruitment process. My interpretivist stance means that I question the way in which headteachers can be appointed. The interpretivist research position incorporates that perceptions of leadership are different according to different individuals and groups, in different contexts and settings, in this instance, different schools. Therefore the focus of this study is primarily people, their views and responses and for the sake of scope for this project, the perceptions of applicants in particular. As Thomas states, the interpretivist researcher is interested in 'every nuance of their behaviour, every clue to their meaning that they are investing in something' (2013, p109). Bryman's explanation of the role of the interpretivist social scientist is, I believe, applicable here, 'the job of the social scientist is to gain access to people's 'common-sense thinking' and hence to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view' (2016, p27). It is

this thinking that underpins methodological choices. The methods I pick therefore will need to be able to access these thoughts.

The interpretivist position also links to the examination of 'leadership identity' that has emerged from my review of literature, (Ibarra, 2003, Ibarra et al., 2014 and Gecas, 1982) in that it is better suited to deal with 'the inconsistencies, conflicts, and subtleties of ideals, beliefs and feelings that form such an important part of human life' (Buckler and Walliman, 2016, p147). From my literature review I can map the stages of recruitment and selection and connect this to the idea of leadership identity. The first stage describes initial steps of transition that have begun, where the applicants see themselves as 'someone other than a teacher' (Thomson, 2009, p29). This leads to the second stage of transition where the applicant's sense of identity has to be reviewed, described and explained in the application to respond to the recruitment material. The third stage is the presentation and testing of identity through the interview process, a comparison of perceptions, so that at some point the fourth stage can be reached where the new identity is confirmed with appointment. In these stages, as outlined in the model (Figure 2.2, p20) there are different perceptions of self, depending on what stage the applicant is at. Within the 'field' of the recruitment process, the hypothetical question emerges as to whether it is possible to successfully communicate your potential from these different perspectives. This is another aspect that drives research methods choices and the ways in which data analysis takes place; is there any sense of correlation between the different perspectives? It is a question of there being enough of an overlap of our perceptions to establish some kind of common ground, a coherence of thinking to be strong enough grounds for an appointment.

The investigation of the perceptions of applicants and its comparison with my model of the selection and recruitment process mirrors the 'double interpretation' (Bryman, 2016, p28) seen as part of the work of the interpretivist researcher. Bryman suggests that 'the [interpretivist] researcher provides an interpretation of others' interpretations' (2016, p28). This is about taking the views of others and trying to build your own understanding of the process. As Bryman suggests, 'the social scientist will aim to place the interpretations that have been elicited into a social scientific frame'

(2016, p28). For me this would be comparing the perceptions of applicants against the backdrop of the recruitment and selection process. He then goes on to say that in research this is followed by 'third level of interpretation' (2016, p28) when the researcher puts their interpretation of others' interpretations into the context of the theoretical discipline that is being studied. In this context this is against the broader context of how leadership is developed in education. This is the approach I intend to follow with regards to the investigation of the process of recruiting headteachers.

3.1.1 Theoretical Assumptions Underpinning the Paradigm

In terms of paradigm, I believe therefore that my focus is on the subjective aspects of the individual's sense of identity, working within an interpretivist position. Exploring the Research Approach is to show the implication of adopting this Research Paradigm on the world I am encountering through this research. To question the existence of an external reality can be unsettling for some more comfortable with a positivist position. For example, this is not unlike describing a jumper as being turquoise in colour, with half the people labeling it as blue and the other half saying that it was green. Is the jumper objectively one colour or another, or is it always going to be subjectively both? The epistemology that underpins this has its origins in Berkeley's Idealism, where in his 'Three Dialogues', written in 1713, he challenges that reality can exist independently of our sense perceptions, taking doubt of objective materialism to its logical conclusions (Berkeley, 1988). In this instance, having a lack of external reality, means that I am suggesting that leadership exists only because of someone's perception of it, rather than it being an objective reality in the world that can be tested as such. A belief that this is the case determines my research position and therefore determines subsequent choices of methodology.

Even considering the points raised by Idealism leads me to question whether in seeking an understanding of leadership I can rely upon a simple understanding of the correspondence theory of truth, in terms of language. That is to say, can I, with any confidence, say that certain statements about leadership, or headship in particular are true because they correspond to facts of reality within the world? Very quickly I see

how basic misunderstandings of language can arise when ideas relating to headship are discussed, because of the difficulty of trying to use a shared language to correspond accurately to what exists within the world. For example, headship can mean something entirely different comparing one type of school with another, or one age range with another. It is at this point possible to see why criticism has been made of the interpretivist position 'that they become hermetically sealed from the world outside the participants' theatre of activity' (Cohen et al., 2011, p21). This leads me to consider integrating a coherence theory of truth so that, instead of looking for a corresponding reality, I can examine the way in which common language concerning headship coheres or hangs together across different contexts. I can acknowledge that there are different perceptions of headship and still ask the question, is the language about the role coherent? This would be to ask applicants about their views of headship, to see if different roles mean different views and to see if there is any coherence amongst them all. This is particularly significant in researching the recruitment and selection process, where there can easily be conflicting understandings that ultimately do not cohere with each other. Appropriate research methods, where language can be analysed, need to be thorough to review different perspectives to ensure that this is possible.

It is easy to see that the difficulty of establishing a common language of headship, not only could fail to correspond to reality, but could also struggle when put together with ideas such as an underlying moral imperative. Confidence comes from a coherence of statements that makes it is possible to say that 'truth is relative to a system of beliefs – a view called cognitive relativism' (Horner and Westcott, 2000, p54). The logical consequence of this view could have taken me to a position such as Phenomenalism, where everything is seen in terms of subjective sense experiences. However, the initial difficulty of maintaining this position is that it can lead a person to doubt the existence of minds outside of their self and this solipsist position is not one that coheres with the layering of other's perceptions of leadership (Horner and Westacott, 2000, pp49ff). Whilst this may be seen as an extreme position in relation to this topic it is interesting to see that different perspectives of headship refer to something that cannot be established by fact and yet the recruitment process is perhaps artificially trying to provide an objective process regarding the hunt for the right headship appointment.

The reality is that this is of course a subjective decision and, no matter how many criteria are referenced, the decision still comes down to a difference of opinion. For example, an essential criterion could be the length of experience in post, this is a factual detail of which the answer is either yes or no in terms of whether you have the required years. However, its selection as a criterion is still a subjective choice, based upon a different perspective of what constitutes good leadership, and yet in this context it is a deciding factor in what makes a good headteacher.

Considering these views makes me question as to whether applicants feel it is subjective or whether they think that the process of designing a framework with criteria actually makes it possible for it to be the search for an objective candidate. It can be argued that if everyone understands epistemologically that this is what is happening then it might make the process a lot easier. This is not dissimilar to something Gunter suggests, 'what is core…is the issue of decision-making, and how administrative procedures as a science fail to connect with *philosophical* considerations regarding values' (2016, p50).

I find it helpful at this point is to see how Phenomenology was brought into social sciences through Schutz's writings (Bryman, 2016, p26). As Bryman cites Schutz, 'social reality – has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting and thinking within it. By a series of common-sense constructs they have pre-selected and pre-interpreted this world, which they experience as the reality of their daily lives' (Schutz, 1962, quoted, in Bryman, 2016, p27). This helps in that it focuses the research to show that the possible conflicting statements regarding headship are not just differences of opinion, but different understandings of 'social reality' (2016, p27). This is something I can investigate through choosing to interview those involved in the process, as part of the design method. For example, in the study of prospective principals, one of Browne-Ferrigno's interviewees talks about the change in her perception of her identity self that it is like wearing 'a new pair of glasses' (2003, p489). An implementation of my interpretivist position suggests that we are all wearing different pairs of glasses and the aim of this research is to see recruitment and selection through as many different pairs as is possible. This then goes beyond saying

that the role of headteacher is multi-faceted, instead it suggests that the role means something entirely different, depending on the perspective of the individual. It seems quite likely at this stage that the whole approach to recruiting a headteacher can rest upon whether you are able to establish compatibility with certainty or whether you recognise that all experiences are subjective. One possible outcome of the research might be to establish that if this layering of perspectives is acknowledged then the whole approach to recruiting and selecting might be freed up to take a number of different formats.

From looking at the literature relating to the recruitment process, not only is there a case to suggest that leadership is seen from different perspectives, but also that it seems that different ideas are being shared at different stages of the process. Not least that the presentation of the role by the recruiters in the early stages has to be attractive enough to persuade applicants to apply, especially given the prevailing context of negativity surrounding the role. However, the presentation of the role is likely to change to be something more pragmatic in the selection process where issues of 'cloning' (Gronn and Lacey, 2006) and 'fit' (Grummell et al., 2009) are considered. In this sense I want to discover if there is any relationship between, for example, the initial presentation of the role in the recruitment materials and the applicant's understanding of the criteria as explored in the panel interview. Or instead are the recruitment materials the equivalent of the booster rockets that get the shuttle into space, but then are jettisoned when they have done their job.

If this is the case what does it mean for those trying to share their potential leadership identity by applying? It is possible to see that success in this process involves playing the game of working with a shared understanding, depending upon what stage of the process you have reached. In doing this I believe that I am beginning to establish my own voice in this subject area, setting up a new model and using this to explore the perceptions and different understandings of language in this process. This leads me to consider the relationship between these different perspectives, particularly taking into account the applicant's leadership self-identity and comparing it with the role as

perceived and presented by the school. My research position establishes the nature of reality and the way knowledge can be shared.

3.2 Implications of the Research Paradigm: knowing the unknowable?

There is a sense that working within the interpretivist position is a kind of immersion into the recruitment process. Certainly in the past I have been an applicant myself and have experienced some of the processes I am now researching. Therefore it would be misleading to think that my research position was objective, but rather there is an underlying acknowledgement that it is our perspective that provides the content, which includes my role as researcher and my interaction with applicants.

Theoretically the research is an investigation into the subjective experience of applicants working towards successful appointments. Of particular interest is the relationship between the subjective world of human experience with its thoughts, feelings, perceptions, sense of self and actions, set against the perception of the objective institutional recruitment process and its need to be fair and transparent. This potential conflict is one to be investigated, for example, the different approaches to working towards a fair process often ends with its own difficulties, for example transparency with criteria can end with a tendency towards 'cloning' (Blackmore et al., 2006, Gronn and Lacey, 2006). This is the basis of Bourdieu's examination of human experience, of the function of 'fields' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). English and Bolton suggest that the concept of fields in Bourdieu is 'networks or configurations that impose values and rules in specific social spaces' (2016, p32). The process of appointing headteachers becomes a field in its own right, with its own participants, its own rules and, not surprisingly, 'its own logic' (2016, p32). This also connects to another implication of the interpretivist approach and that is that the 'function of language becomes an important issues in the debate' (Buckler and Walliman, 2016, p148). Just as each field has its own logic, it is possible to see that each participant has their own understanding of language. It is easy to see that differences of opinion with regard to the nature of headship can easily be seen as misunderstandings of language,

which connects back to Wittgenstein and the problems of misunderstanding language (2009). Research design needs to flexible enough to be able to take this into account.

The formation of my model (Figure 2.2, p20) stems from the recognition that when the recruitment and selection process is examined it is possible to see this as its own world with internal views and inconsistencies. This is something that has added to the perceived mystery of the recruitment process. For example, the process itself varies in different settings, the initial recruitment materials can appear to be somewhat distinct from the actual selection process, and different aspects of the role can be emphasized at different times of the process. Something as simple as a meet and greet with different members of the governing body, during an interview process, shows that different governors can have very different priorities for the headship post, no matter how many criteria have been established. The challenge of putting together the most appropriate research design is that it needs to be able to take account of these peculiarities.

When meeting with other deputy heads and discussing the possible move to headship, the question often asked is what is being looked for? The fact that this question continues to be asked shows that the answer has become something mysterious and potentially unknowable. At one gathering of deputy heads that I attended, the answer given, as to how to achieve headship, by a panel of headteachers, was serendipity and a good mentor. The first answer, individuals can do little to actively secure and the second perhaps is as dependent on the first, if you happen to find yourself in a school where someone is prepared to act in that capacity. This seems to reinforce that the process can appear to have a life of its own, is mysterious and even random at times. The thinking behind this educational doctorate is to demystify the process if that is possible, and to understand more of these different perceptions of headship, looking for possible coherence. In terms of the interpretivist position, the goal becomes 'to take from the local experience and illuminate and influence the local experience' (Thomas, 2013, p110). Ideally I want to be able to give a better answer than luck to headship applicants with regards to preparing for possible success.

I am in the process of investigating whether the applicants' perceptions of headship are something that is constructed partly through the recruitment process itself and whether it is possible that these perceptions are something entirely independent from the actual post, which the successful applicant then goes on to fulfill. This subjective interpretation of the leadership role is at odds with a positivist stance, which might suggest that there is an objective position to be investigated. Instead the headship role is something that changes, not only in terms of time, but also with regard to perspective and also possibly in terms of language. In other words the role of Head is one thing when you are applying, but an entirely different matter when you have been appointed.

Ontologically, I am researching the experiences of different applicants involved in the recruitment process. I am developing these ideas further by suggesting that our understanding of what it is to be a headteacher is constructed from an amalgamation of different perspectives of what it means to take on this role today. This suggests that this can be uncovered through discovering the subjective values that people have, in relation to the recruitment of Heads, and questioning how these values sit alongside the formalized recruitment process, with its own set of rules. I am asking whether these ideas cohere with each other. This position also highlights that the perceptions of headship are changing in response to those involved in the educational leadership debate through time as well. This is something that can be achieved, for example, by analyzing the language of recruitment and selection, has the terminology changed to reflect a changing perception? Headship then is something organic and evolving, not dissimilar to Bryman citing Becker's (1982) example of culture, where it is stated that 'people create culture continuously…no set of cultural understandings' (2016, p30). This again links back to the concept of cultural 'fields' again that Bourdieu presents in 'Outline of a Theory of Practice' (1977), where he considers that understanding can only begin once there is an awareness of the embeddedness of this view within the specific context of the view expressed. For Bourdieu that means to locate the cultural field within the structures and powers, in this case the formalized school structure as well as the government expectations of leadership (1977).

Given the subjective position outlined, I want to evaluate the efficacy of the recruitment process, which appears to be difficult to separate from wide-ranging amalgamation of differing human perspectives. In examining the different stages of the recruitment process, I am considering how today's common practices try to understand the subjectivity and potential inconsistency of views, if that is the case. Looking at the research from the interpretivist position I can summarise that these are the areas that need further investigation:

- A recognition of the range of views from participating in the recruitment process
- What view will the participants have of the headship role and how it might be presented in the recruitment process
- Whether the use of certain language reflects different perspectives
- Also, given the potential underpinning of this paradigm, is the process presenting itself as an objective process or whether this is instead a collection of subjective perspectives

These ideas helped to refine the research questions into their final form and what remains is the most appropriate way to gather this data:

1. How do applicants perceive the role of headteacher presented in the recruitment process & what perception of headship can we take from this?

2. Do applicants think that current recruitment processes allow for a fair opportunity for them to present their potential leadership identity?

3. What opportunities should exist to allow aspiring applicants to develop their sense of leadership identity?

3.3 Research Design

As established, the interpretivist researcher is likely to analyse language and processes to see if it is possible to establish patterns of meaning. The interpretivist researcher will 'strive to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors' (Cohen et al., 2011, p31). This means that the choice of research design is primarily concerned with the views and descriptions of those involved in the recruitment process and in this

case, the applicants in particular. Thomas suggests that interpretative inquiry has to 'study the meanings that people are constructing of the situations in which they find themselves and proceed from these meaning in order to understand the social world' (Thomas, 2016, p204). I had initially placed the work within the category of Action Research, in the sense that I saw the research project as potentially problem-solving. I was aware from my own professional experience, and that of others I had worked with, that there were possible problems with inconsistencies within the recruitment process. Ambitiously I saw my work as possibly culminating in some suggestions to changes in practice. However, I think a more accurate and likely outcome is to be able to make recommendations for ways in which professional practice can develop further, based on a case study approach, through focusing on the key components of the recruitment process. The justification for opting for a case study approach is that it allows for an in-depth study and comparison of a number of parallel cases. I have realised that it would be difficult and not necessarily advantageous to follow one recruitment process through from start to finish. I recognised that there might be issues in terms of ethics and protecting the identity of those involved in the process as well as it being perhaps too limiting to be able to look for the comparison of perspectives I wanted to examine. Also, with a central thread of my study being the issue of the successful communication of the potential leadership identity, I would need to be able to have access to all of the applicants and this was not going to be practical with one case study. However, the case study still seems the best choice for research design to allow for collection of different points of view about the recruitment process. This means that the main information can be collected via interviews, but that other methods can also be integrated to give me a wider overview of the applicants along with the context of the process.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison outline six possible advantages of using case study (2011, p292). Firstly, they are considered 'strong in reality' in that the data gathered often resonates with the reader's experiences. Secondly that the case study allows for a form of generalisation despite, third, being a reflection of the complexity of 'social truths' (2011, p292). Fourthly, the case study may generate enough data to warrant revisiting and reinterpretation. Fifthly, 'they begin in a world of action and contribute

to it' (2011, p292), which would compensate for my original inclination towards Action Research. Finally, the case study can provide information for a range of audiences and this is something that I hoped would be a consequence.

The research context lends itself primarily to a multiple case study design (Yin, 2014, Stake, 2006). Yin suggests that research based upon an investigation into current circumstances works well with a case study approach (2014, p4). In choosing a case study design it allows for different sources or evidence, including qualitative and quantitative data. For this case study, the subjects are the applicants. As Silverman states in 'studies, cases are often *individuals'* (2014, p69). The case study design is the best choice if, as Yin suggests, you will be covering 'questions [that] require an extensive and "in depth" description of some social phenomenon' (2014, p4). Browne-Ferrigno references Krathwohl (1998) in saying that 'case study research is exploration' (2003, p472). Browne-Ferrigno goes on to quote Krathwohl (1998, p26) saying that 'a qualitative researcher can begin an inquiry with "a target of interest" and then describe, "whatever emerges of significance"' (2003, p472). In this sense the type of case study is most likely to be 'descriptive' (Yin, 2014, p9), in the way that it will explore how the process takes place, but there will be a need to understand the reasoning behind the use of certain procedures in the selection process. This would mean that the interview process can contribute to an 'evaluative' type of case study using Merriam's classifications (Cohen et al., 2011, p291). This is because there may be the need to highlight inconsistencies between different points of view or explore perceptions of unfairness in approach. As stated previously, using a case study follows from my research position, not least in that it has the advantage of being able to 'recognise the complexity and 'embeddedness' of social truths' (Cohen et al., 2011, p292). Or as Flyvbjerg (2004) puts it, quoted in Silverman, 'good narratives typically approach the complexities and contradictions of real life' (2014, p71). Rather than following one person through the recruitment process it is more consistent with the research paradigm to immerse the research into the recruitment process itself. This involves a number of different sources of evidence and different methods, but the main focus is people and therefore gains the views of a number of different applicants

about their involvement in different recruitment processes. This also allows for a comparison of perspectives.

For these reasons, I am primarily focusing on Yin's understanding of case study and in particular his 'multiple-case design' (2014, p56). My focus on a case study design emerges from the need to examine specific examples within their own context. In this case the specific examples are the experiences of real participants within their own context, but ultimately their involvement is determined by their experience within the recruitment process. By looking at the recruitment process, with all of these different perspectives, I hope to gain something of what is meant by Foucault's 'polyhedron of intelligibility' (1981, p6) to build up a more complex picture from individual parts, to gain a deeper understanding of the recruitment process, which even now has a certain mystery to it. In this sense it is a multiple case study design because instead of focusing on the appointment of one head and following that through by interviewing all of those involved, which might raise more ethical problems, I am looking at a representative sample of applicants, and using their insight to layer views, gaining a greater understanding of their view of the process. In this way I hope that my case study is more evaluative in nature than just descriptive (Yin, 2014, p217) in that I want to explain and examine the views once I have discovered them. It is a multiple-case design because I am comparing different perspectives of the role from people going through the same process (Cohen et al., 2011, p291) with overlapping agreement (Stake, 2006). Thomas (2013) outlines that by carrying out a multiple case study project it is then possible to look at different cases that are happening in parallel to each other and this works well with the focus of my thesis. These different cases will include a questionnaire for potential applicants, descriptions of the headship role, written by those involved, along with follow-up interviews with applicants.

3.3.1 Using a range of methods

Having established my research paradigm as interpretivist and adopting a multiple case study design, it seems natural that the main focus of data gathering is interactions with

participants in the process, in this case applicants. Looking at the final version of my research questions it is clear that different data gathering methods are useful to be able to answer the range of questions.

All aspects of this research intend to bring together the layering of perceptions of leadership identity at different stages of the journey, as explored in the literature review, along with the suggested tangible and practical components of the recruitment and selection process. Making use of three different methods allows me to test some initial ideas, to sample some of the different views, and then use that information to shape the follow-up interview schedule based upon previous findings. The use of three methods is not being used through any concern of weakness in the individual components, rather the data can be used to illustrate the layering of perceptions that is part of my interpretivist paradigm. A common theme that is quickly emerging with all three methods is that they are data gathering methods for working with words. Having established that the interpretivist paradigm is dependent not only on an investigation into the variety of perceptions, but also again the underpinning importance of language.

3.4 Online Questionnaire

3.4.1 Research Design

The justification for using an online questionnaire emerges from an early idea to begin to build a broader picture of the different perceptions of the recruitment process by asking a larger group of the potential applicants. Given that aspiring heads are based in different schools it is difficult to go to schools and ask the staff, are you thinking of applying for headship in the next few years, particularly because this might not be something that the individuals would want identifying, in front of either colleagues or managers. Having worked in schools where unsolicited research questionnaires were sent in for the staff to respond to, I am also aware that the responses rate is not normally high. These reasons led me to consider choosing an online questionnaire as this has the potential of reaching aspiring applicants, each its own independent case,

spread apart geographically. I also recognise that one way I already have contact with a wide range of teachers in different schools across the country, working at different levels is via Twitter. Putting together an online questionnaire also makes it possible to begin to gain answers to the research questions. I can ask how the role has been presented to applicants through the associated materials and (as a result) what perception of headship this prompts with headship applicants. I am also able to ask aspiring applicants about their views of the recruitment process itself. It allows me to ask the applicants about the transition of self and to see whether this is something that applicants themselves can comment upon. I want to be able to gain information regarding their perceptions of self, in terms of their own developing leadership identity, if they have even considered their pursuit of headship in those terms and how they feel they are best able to communicate their potential through the recruitment process.

I will collect this data via an online questionnaire administered using Twitter, because it is a way to reach a wider audience than my own set of contacts and it also allows me to be able to target a particular group of people. I hope that by setting this up online people have the freedom to choose to respond or not and if they do they are more likely to reply to the questions once they have clicked. I did not know how many would respond, but am encouraged by reading that 'response rates for internet-based surveys are generally higher than for conventional approaches' (Bryman, 2016, p280, citing Glover and Bush, 2005).

Having researched the different software options for constructing an online survey, three template services are at the fore: Survey Monkey (2014), Qualtrics (2014) and Surveygizmo (2014). I decided upon Qualtrics, based upon recommendations from the online doctoral community, ease of construction and the analysis of data that this provides. As Bryman describes, 'respondents' answers can be automatically programmed to download into a database, thus eliminating the daunting coding of a large number of questionnaires' (2016, p231). Combining the online questionnaire with Twitter allows me to ensure that certain ethical frameworks are in place to protect those who choose to respond as to respond purely through Twitter might place certain aspects of the data straight into the public domain.

The designing of an online survey is done in combination with the idea to circulate the link to participate in the questionnaire via Twitter. I choose Twitter, and in particular what is often referred to as the context of the educational Twitter community. Stewart talks about the possibility of there being an 'ethnography of influence and identity' with subsets on Twitter (2016, p252). In this instance this applies by including teachers, middle leaders, senior leaders, schools and institutions, educationally based businesses, academic institutions, research bodies and organisations that use the social media tool Twitter as a way of interacting, exchanging information, and as a forum for discussion. This appears to be a suitable realm to share the questionnaire, as I have noticed that the sharing of on-going research, from Higher Education institutions in particular, is regularly becoming a feature of online discussions. Stewart writes that Twitter is well suited as an environment for research as it 'offers the means by which to gain novel perspectives on a phenomenon or culture normally bound by institutional frameworks (2016, p255). This then fits well with my research background of investigating perceptions.

It is also interesting to note that research is carried out on Twitter as a place of potential 'Big Data' and that Bryman has stated that 'not only do Twitter users share information about themselves, they frequently share information about others too' (2016, p301). It may be therefore that Tweeters in this context are more inclined to participate in an online questionnaire as they are already in an environment where information is being shared and yet there is a degree of distance that affords them a sense of privacy in terms of sharing their views. Twitter has become a significant part of the sharing of good practice, both in terms of practitioner advice with teachers and with the academic community and it is something that I participate in on a daily basis. For example, I am regularly involved in a weekly online discussion for Senior Leaders in schools and those interested in leadership in schools, to which there are 15,000 subscribers. I am also involved in the monthly chats, including hosting, for BELMAS, the British Educational Leadership and Administration Society. Through these discussions, and through talking with others involved in education, I am part of a big network on Twitter with about 2,000 followers. Of course this gives me an insider position,

identified by my Twitter profile and through my previous interactions. My followers can potentially see the questionnaire and, as requested, if this is retweeted by others, it means that the link for the online survey can reach an even wider audience. I made sure to tweet the link at different times of the day and on different days, tweeting the link nine times in the first week of March 2015 in order to attempt to reach as wide an audience as possible. These tweets were also retweeted by others in this academic community. It is important to recognise that by using Twitter as the catchment area for the online questionnaire, you are only ever able to poll those who are comfortable and familiar with this form of social media, as a method of exchanging information. This inevitably means that there is a form of selection process going on within this sphere. However, there is still enough diversity to allow for a range of responses and wide enough pool of possible participants. These reasons lie behind an increase in the way in which research is shared through social media and is now a common feature of online discussions on Twitter, in particular to share links for research surveys from students and staff at different universities. Stewart writes that Twitter not only gives you a 'a site of scholarship' it also is useful for research 'as a means to engage in scholarly investigation' (2016, p265). Access to this group does come from being prepared to engage with this form of social network, which does take time and effort, but in this case prompts useful data on the views of applicants. As Weller writes, 'for those who have taken the step to establishing an online identity, these networks are undoubtedly of significant value in their everyday practice (2011, p7).

3.4.2 Research Method

The focus of this questionnaire is to ask questions relating to the recruitment process of those who are either currently applying for headship posts or are considering this in the next two years. The survey consists of 20 questions and takes on average 10-20 minutes to complete. In order to engage and sustain the interest of those looking at the questionnaire, I recognise the need to balance the questions requiring free text answers with Likert style questions and ranking questions. Cohen, Manion and Morrison suggest that online surveys have been shown to generate better data with

radio buttons, click answers or tick box answers, because of the separation of the eye looking at the screen to the hand operating the mouse or keyboard (2011, p277).

Given these intentions, the questionnaire (see Appendix A for full questionnaire with questions and answers) begins by asking basic details, case classifications, about the teacher's gender, age and career to date, for example the types of schools they have taught in and whether they have taken or will take an NPQH. The following questions ask the participants about their perceptions of the recruitment process and the skills, experience and qualities that they felt were necessary to apply. The questions then ask them how effective they feel certain aspects of the appointment process are, for example, how the post was presented in the recruitment materials, the interview, the tour and the school website. The aspiring heads are then asked questions about what has triggered their interest in applying for headship and whether they have had any experience of recruitment agents. Open questions ask about whether they think the selection process is fair and whether applicants could benefit from being mentored. Finally the applicants are asked directly about their own sense of leadership identity. The content of these questions arose from the development of my theoretical model (see Figure 2.3, p58) that underpins both the recruitment and selection processes of appointing a headteacher. These are the questions as they are worded on the questionnaire itself:

(Questions on anonymised agreement, case classifications and agreement of use)

6. Have you undertaken the NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship)

7. Is there a reason why you thought it was good to take the NPQH?

Or 8. Is there a reason why you have not taken the NPQH?

9. How important are the following factors for you to consider applying for a headship post?

(Factors included: Headship brochure, Job Description, Person Specification, School Prospectus, Letter from the Chair of Governors, School website and school tour)

10. By dragging to rearrange these factors, rank in order what you feel are the most important being considered by those involved with the appointment of a new Head

(Factors included: Qualifications, Proven track record, Personality, Leadership Style, Knowledge of the school, Knowledge of the area, knowledge of policies, financial acumen, Experience, Confidence, Authority, Age and Gender)

11. Have you ever been approached by a Recruitment Consultant?

12. Did you find it helpful to your process of considering headship to talk with a Recruitment Consultant?

13. Have you considered contacting any recruitment firms?

14. Was there a trigger or triggers that made you consider applying for headship posts?

15. Do you think applying for headships involves any kind of identity shift?

16. By dragging the bar, show to what extent do you think you have already mentally shifted from seeing yourself as a teacher (1) to seeing yourself as a headteacher (10)?

17. Do you think that aspiring headteachers would benefit from being mentored?

18. How effective do you think the following aspects of the selection process are for establishing potential leadership and suitability?

19. How fair do you feel the selection process is?

20. Which do you think is the best way for you to convey your leadership potential during the recruitment process?

21. How essential do you think these qualities are for headship?

22. If you could change one factor of the recruitment process for headship what would it be?

3.4.3 Sampling

The questionnaire is used to discover views of one key group involved in the appointment of headteachers, the views and experiences of the applicants. The respondents that answered the questions as part of the online questionnaire were self-selecting, although as indicated, they have been filtered, by being part of the online educational Twitter community. There may have been some concerns that the participants would have also been filtered by being part of my Twitter following in particular, so that they knew me either personally or online. However it was evident that, as a result of the re-tweeting, the vast majority of the participants do not follow

me on Twitter and are unknown to me. As the link had been circulated on Twitter, it means that people were free to decide for themselves whether or not they wanted to participate. There were 60 respondents to the online questionnaire although not all answered every question, but the data gathered allows me to see how many have answered each question and to track individual respondents as necessary.

The group has a split of 62% female and 38% male, with the majority of teachers having been in the profession over 16 years and the majority have taught in state schools (79%). The majority of teachers who answered the questionnaire are between 35-42 years.

3.4.4 Analysis

The survey consists of potentially 22 questions that could be answered. The first five questions give statistical information regarding the respondents including gender, age bracket, experience in post and information on the type of school they work in. Of the remaining questions, eight were open-ended text based answers, three questions were Likert, ranking style questions and other questions included drop down boxes or to drag a bar to indicate their answer. Certain questions are able to generate some descriptive statistical data, taking into account the number of participants that have actually responded. The website software (Qualtrics, 2014) collates the data for ease of access for the researcher. This data can be used in response to the research questions:

1. How do applicants perceive the role of headteacher presented in the recruitment process & what perception of headship can we take from this?

2. Do applicants think that current recruitment processes allow for a fair opportunity for them to present their potential leadership identity?

3. What opportunities should exist to allow aspiring applicants to develop their sense of leadership identity?

The open questions as part of the survey allow for some frequency analysis so that ideas raised can be investigated further as part of the follow-up interview process.

With many of the questions being answered by approximately 29 or 30 correspondents it is possible to compare answers and to contrast these according to case comparisons, for example, gender and age. Through reading and re-reading the answers it is possible to see some themes emerging, which then also provided potential codes for analysis of the other two methods of gathering data.

3.5 Review of Headship Recruitment Packs

3.5.1 Research Design

The second part of my research is an analysis of the ways in which the headship posts have been represented in a textual way. This has been raised through my work in reviewing literature and I have seen that this has taken place before, but not for a few years (Foster, 1996, Kirkham, 2000, Thomson, 2009). This potentially means there is the possibility for some useful comparisons. The main way that potential applicants begin to know what a particular school is looking for is by looking at a headship recruitment pack. This will either be a pack put together by the school's governing body, in conjunction with a recruitment agency, local authority or academy trust. The main justification for this method of gathering data is that it is likely that considerable thought will have gone into the presentation of the post, therefore it is potentially a good way of establishing a schools' perception of what they believe headship to be for them. Conversely, I have the impression that the recruitment materials are often dismissed as being less significant by those applying and so I want to see if this really is the case and whether the language used reveals any significant insights about the perceptions of headship and identity.

Given that recruitment processes have their own terminology and procedures it seems appropriate to conduct a textual analysis of a sample of headship recruitment packs, and the Job Descriptions and Person Specifications in particular, as these are common elements to most recruitment packs. This is one way of being able to sample the views of different school communities and compare these to the applicants' perceptions. By focusing on these two documents it makes the scope more manageable, as research

prior to the semi-structured interviews, but there is enough material in itself to be able to begin to look for patterns or contrasting perceptions in relation to the headship role.

This approach is developed from looking at methods that have been used by Thomson (2009) who in contrast took one week's worth of advertisements in the *Times Educational Supplement* and this produced 185 advertisements across a range of sectors and age groups.

This is also a reason why looking at documents as a source of evidence is useful, as Brundrett and Rhodes suggest, 'documents are recordings of events and perceptions at a particular time that are set within and produced against a backdrop of the prevailing cultural, socio-economic, political and policy environment (2014, p105). As such, analysing these documents and being able to compare these with similar, if older, studies provides a snapshot of headship as experienced in the current climate.

3.5.2 Research Method

From September 2014 until early Spring 2015 I checked the *Times Educational Supplement* for headship appointments to begin in September 2015 and, if it was possible to download the relevant recruitment materials without registering interest, those examples were added to the sample. Once all the packs had been gathered I looked at the different documents that were included, some had letters from the governors, some had information about the school, some additional information about the post, for example perks (see Appendix B for a table break down of all participating schools). However, two documents were common to all of the packs these were the Job Description and the Person Specification.

I have focused on the job description and person specification rather than the description of the institution, although simple details of the institution are recorded for comparison and sampling. This data can be used primarily in conjunction with the first research question: How do applicants perceive the role of headteacher presented in

the recruitment process & what perception of headship can we take from this? Each set of documents presents a different picture of the school's expectations regarding headship, with different wording and different emphases.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison cite Anderson and Arsenault's suggestion (2011, p563) that 'content analysis can describe the *relative frequency* and importance of certain topics as well as to evaluate bias, prejudice or propaganda in print materials'. In this case, by looking at the two components of the recruitment pack: job description and person specification, these will cover expectations, specifically in terms of role and applicant. Initially these areas include the frequency of terms, for example, those used to describe their desirable qualities for the person succeeding in the post, I am also looking for language linked to other perceptions of headship, the NPQH (DfE, 2014, updated 2015), or headship standards (DfE, 2015) to see if these appear in the wording.

After looking at the sample of headship recruitment materials, I am able to follow up on any findings in the semi-structured interviews. Not least I want to see just how significant these documents are seen by the applicants. From my own experience, these had been the basis, along with other factors, of writing any accompanying statement as part of an application. I want to see if these are dismissed in terms of their significance, what role they have been playing, and whether they paint a picture of headship that has not changed from previous analyses.

3.5.3 Sampling

This sample provides 30 job descriptions and 30 person specifications and is taken from job advertisements for headteachers from the academic year 2014/2015 for appointment in September 2015. The sample consists of 30 secondary schools across England. This sample is made up of 11 Independent Schools, 19 State Schools and 14 of the schools have academy status. The criteria for inclusion are that the final sample is as representative as it can be with regard to type of school and its location, also every headship pack has to be able to be accessed by anyone. This usually means that I was

able to download it from a website, usually the school website and it was not sent in response to an expression of interest. A representative sample was gathered from one recruiting period, of 30 different schools, independent, state, academy, faith based, single sex, mixed, day and boarding (see Appendix B).

The advertisements all require a headteacher, although with different wordings for this title, for September 2015. The school sample covers a wide range geographically (see Figure 3.1). Of the sample the majority of the schools were co-educational, with seven girls' schools and two boys' schools. The schools also ranged widely in size from the smallest having 60 on roll and the largest currently having 2,200 on roll.

Figure 3.1 The geographical spread of schools that had headship recruitment packs analysed

3.5.4 Analysis

Given that the Person Specification and the Job Description are potentially a distilled view of headship, the words chosen are particularly important. These documents are normally one to two sides of A4, some are lists of bullet points and others are written in narrative form. Despite the belief that these documents should be fully representative of the schools' views on their needs regarding headship there was a potential fear that the documents would be generic, particularly as some have been created in conjunction with the same or similar recruitment consultants. However,

every job description and person specification was unique to each school and therefore can be analysed as 30 different examples of each type of document.

The main approach is using content analysis, but this is always set in the wider context. For example, the word 'values' could occur in the text, but it is significant if in context it appears as 'school's values' rather than it being a statement about the potential values of the successful applicant. Also it is important, coming from the interpretivist position, to have a sense of meaning beyond the text. As Bryman suggests, 'an interpretive outlook argues for social phenomena such as documents being socially constructed' (2016, p254). This means that I want to apply content analysis to this collection of 60 documents. To identify what language is being used to describe the posts and how this compares to earlier descriptions.

Analysis looks for common phrases or words that appear and presents data regarding the 'skills and attributes' that are seen as desirable (2000, p21). I repeated this process by looking at the frequency of particular words and phrases. The content analysis is comparable to the approach used by Kirkham (2000), Thomson (2009) and Foster (1996). Kirkham analyses the language into two groups, one that looks at the wording describing the institution and another group looking at the wording used to describe the 'professional characteristics required of the successful applicant' (2000, p19). Thomson looks at what 'personal characteristics' (2009, p48) are named, rather than inferred, in the advertisement and also at 'what the head was expected to do' as outlined in the wording of the advertisement. Foster's approach is to focus very specifically on details from the press advertisement and from the person specification in establishing common patterns of what was being looked for, for example, in terms of experience (1996, pp105ff). By comparison the presentations of leadership that I am looking at, with the 30 Job Descriptions and 30 Person Specifications, inevitably qualified what is understood of the headship role in that school, and because of this they are a useful comparison with the subjective, human perspectives examined as part of qualitative online-questionnaire and the follow-up semi-structured interview data.

The data looks specifically at occurrence and frequency of certain terms in these documents and can be compared with related documents (see Appendices C and D for

the top 50 words featured in these two documents). The existing analysis of the Headship Job Application packs and the comparison with the wording found in the 'National standards of excellence for headteachers' (DfE, 2015) and the overview of the NPQH modules (DfE, 2014 updated 2015) provides useful information for the coding for the analysis of the data from the semi-structured interviews.

3.6 Semi-Structured Interviews

3.6.1 Research Design

My choice of methodology, for one aspect of my research, needs to be a further investigation into the views of the applicants and their views on the various human interactions that feature at each stage of this process. Investigating these views shows what they understand about the post on offer, as well as their own sense of leadership identity. This fits with Bourdieu's explanation of fields as 'a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions objectively defined in their existence and in the determinations they impose upon their occupants, agents or institutions, by their present and potential situation' (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p39). It is interesting to see in what sense the applicants understand the rules and conventions, usually unwritten or declared, but still associated with the recruitment and selection process.

The importance of context, in recruiting the best or right person for the job, also fits with a constructivist perspective, in that the recruiter brings with them their knowledge and experience of what would constitute a successful appointment. The interviews give the opportunity for me to examine further the applicant's perceptions of this context. Coming from this paradigm is likely to steer some critical decisions regarding the selection and shape of the research methodology, particularly for the selection of questions and interviewees for the main study.

The format is semi-structured as this is desirable when given the scope of the potential interviewees in terms of their own background and different experiences of going

through selection. The interview process is open enough to consider the individual interviewee, but at the same time there needs to be a common structure in order to allow for comparison and analysis. The format of the semi-structured interviews also allows for enough freedom for there to be a range of views and topics explored and to respond to the person being interviewed, but simultaneously the framework allows for enough common ground for potential analysis (see Appendix E for Interview Framework). Bryman examines the research of Mazmanian, Orlikowski and Yates and refers to their choice of using semi-structured interviews because they were 'open-ended conversations covering a broad and evolving set of questions' that led to 'elaborations and digressions' which included 'interesting themes' (2013, p1340 quoted in Bryman, 2016, p469). The analysis is then as much as what is not said as what is said, about the nuances of language and the way in which the answer is expressed.

3.6.2 Research Methods

The reasons for choosing to use semi-structured interviews relates to the nature of interviewing and to the research position I have adopted. Silverman sums up four aspects of interviewing, based upon a case study he examines in *Interpreting Qualitative Data* (2014). Firstly, Silverman suggests that interviewing requires 'no special skills' (2014, p168). A key aspect of my work in education to date has been interaction with other people and has included as part of this, many interviews, whether that is interviewing teachers for posts, pupils for entry into the school or parents as part of a disciplinary investigation, for example.

Again, my interpretivist position means that I want to evaluate the selection activities by comparing views on the usefulness of different approaches. Silverman's second point, summarizing the use of interviews, states that 'the interview is collaboratively produced' (2014, p168). This resonates with the interpretivist stance I have outlined earlier, in reiterating Bryman's description of the work of the interpretivist social scientist to, 'to interpret their actions and their social world from their point of view' (2016, p27). My job as interviewer here prompts the interviewee through an interaction of perceptions, either through a resonance or challenge of ideas. This also

links to Silverman's third observation on the use of interviews that, 'interviewees are active participants' (2014, p168). I want the interviews to be conversations, interactions, in order to discover the views of those being interviewed. The active role that the participants take leads to the possible discovery of new topics and themes. The responses from those being interviewed can then be compared with related international research on recruitment processes (including Hunter and Hunter, 1984, Kwan and Walker, 2009, NCSL, 2006, Walker and Kwan, 2012 and Wildy et al., 2011). The final observation Silverman makes is that 'no one interviewing style is 'best'' (2014, p168) encourages me that I can gain useful data from this open semi-structured style of interviewing, not only providing responses to the research question, but at the same time raising new ideas and challenges.

Ideally, I wanted to be able to meet with people and interview in person, but it became much easier and quicker to conduct the majority of interviews via Skype. Skype is software that either comes as part of some computer set-ups or is free to download. Users have to set up a Skype account to be able to communicate with other Skype users. Bryman reports that this combination of being able to use the computer and camera has begun to be used seriously in research and that 'early indications are broadly positive' citing a number of examples of its use (2016, p492). Previously if traveling to interviewees was cost prohibitive, one alternative has been to use telephone interviewing. When compared with telephone interviewing, there are a number of immediate advantages of being able to use Skype, obviously in terms of convenience, timing, cost, travel and safety, but also the telephone 'limits the interaction to verbal communication alone' (Dean et al., 2014, p113). Skype allows for the privacy of a face-to-face interview, where non-verbal responses can be experienced along with verbal answers, without having to be literally face-to-face. Rather than see a Skype interview as a poor substitute, Deakin and Wakefield argue that the 'online interview should be treated as a viable option to the researcher rather than as an alternative or secondary choice when face-to-face interviews cannot be achieved' (2014, p604). Deakin and Wakefield describe some of the possible limitations associated with using Skype as an interview method, for example, the need for a good Internet connection, the possible embarrassment some interviewees may feel at being filmed by a camera or the reliance upon the compatibility of specific hardware and

software (2014). Bryman also mentions some potential limitations with this method including technological issues, for example, again, the quality of the internet connection on both sides, the need for recording the interview in some way and he points to evidence that suggests that participants feel less of an obligation to attend a Skype interview and that they are easier to decline (2016, p492). I want the interviews to be an opportunity to encourage the participants to reflect upon their perceptions of headship and their views on what makes an effective recruitment process. How many can be interviewed depends upon access, although I want the interviews to be in-depth so a fewer number of interviews would still potentially generate significant data.

The interview framework was determined by the research questions and the information gained from the online questionnaire. There are three main areas of focus for the questioning: difficulty of recruiting headteachers, what is shared in terms of leadership identity and confidence in the process. Each area has three main questions associated with it and each of these has follow up questions and topics that can be taken further.

3.6.3 Sampling

As previously stated I want to follow up on some of the views shared in the online questionnaire, to focus on those who have been applying for headships in English secondary schools in order to make the scope manageable for the purposes of this project. Initially I did consider narrowing this further to look at English Independent secondary schools, given my own recent experience in this sector, but early on in the research process, I realised that I was potentially missing out on the chance of making some interesting comparisons between the different sectors. Within this wider sample there has been a level of purposive sampling to represent different experiences. Naturally the sample sizes are likely to be small, which means that there is no attempt to say that this sample is able to be fully representative of the entire school population. It is also taken into account that given the sensitive and personal focus of the research,

access is difficult anyway and the idea of narrowing potential access could make the process harder still.

The purposive sampling aims to include a fair range people involved in the process, so that includes possible follow up questioning to aspiring heads and questions to heads who had recently been appointed. As Silverman puts forward, 'purposive sampling demands that we think critically about the parameters of the population we are interested in and choose our sample case carefully on this basis' (2014, p61). In order to make the sample size manageable I have considered conducting a semi-structured interview with up to three or four if possible. I am aware that given the subject area of the research, it may be difficult to get access to people prepared to share their experiences of applying. From my on-going work in education, I know a number of different contacts that might help and this would of course reflect upon my position as researcher. However, I still want there to be enough distance between my interviewees and myself so that they can freely answer my questions without any expectation of certain responses. This also helps in terms of avoiding conflicting ethical issues (see 3.9 Ethics).

I recruited some of the participants via contacts made on Twitter. When I carried out the online questionnaire for aspiring headteachers I asked them whether they were happy to participate in future research. I contacted all of those who had agreed to participate. I had two responses willing to be interviewed and both had been appointed as heads since participating in the survey as aspiring heads. Not knowing from the outset who would be part of the final sample means that there was an opportunistic element to the sampling process (Louis et al., 2011, p158). The final sample emerged from the other data collection methods. For example, other participants were asked through people I already knew in the education world or through contacts made when working in school as an educational trainer. Each participant was given an information sheet (see Appendix F) and if they agreed to participate they were then given a consent form to complete and return (see Appendix G). The final sample constituted four interviews, each lasting approximately an hour. Two of the four applicants were women and two were male, two had previously been

part of the online questionnaire and had now been successfully appointed in their first headship. Another was an experienced headteacher in their second role and the final interviewee had just been appointed, but had not yet taken up their post.

3.6.4 Analysis

As I want to continue to build the layers of perceptions of headship, this primarily involves fieldwork conducting semi-structured follow-up interviews with some applicants or existing headteachers who have been through the process. Given the research framework and the subsequent research questions, the analysis makes it possible to recognise the different interviews not as 'potentially 'true' pictures of 'reality'', instead it is the whole experience that is able to be opened up 'for analysis' seeing 'the culturally rich methods through which interviewers and interviewees, in concert, generate plausible accounts of the world' (Silverman, 2013, p283). In this instance this hopefully makes it possible to identify different perceptions of headship and be able to compare these across the sample. This involves a certain amount of subjective interpretation. Cohen, Manion and Morrison recognize the tension involved in analyzing interviews with the importance of 'maintaining a sense of holism' with 'the tendency for analysis to atomize and fragment the data' (2011, p427).

In tackling this danger, I considered the best way to use the recordings of the interviews and ended up transcribing the interviews myself, despite it taking much longer to do so. One reason for doing this is that it allows for the constant revisiting to the interview data, going through the material slowly and repeatedly, which makes the coding process easier. This also allows me to hear again the context of the interview data, taking into account aspects such as nuance, tone and humour in the delivery of the answer. With the possibility of falling foul to the crime of fragmenting the data, the first round of analysis that I carried out, post transcription, was to put the contents of the replies of each of the interviewees into a word cloud. Word clouds represent a body of text in a visual form of a cluster of words where the larger the word in font size the more frequently it occurs in the text (see Figure 3.2, p94 for one example). This is the first step in coding the interview data as I can see which have been the dominant

themes in each of the interviews. Although this does break the transcript down to individual words, because of the comparison of sizes it is still possible to consider the relationship between different words and phrases. This enables me to begin to identify key themes that I can then investigate through further coding.

Figure 3.2

Example of a word cloud generated from a semi-structured interview

This proves to be a useful part of the coding process, as it allows me to begin to identify common codes and themes, alongside the questions that have been asked, for example, did the applicants reference leadership at all? How often did the applicants talk about the role of the governors? The reason for using this method combines the use of interviews, along with my own research position, in that there is recognition of the subjectivity of interpretation juxtaposed with the reality of the interview data, for example, what were the applicants' thoughts on the panel interview. An important aspect of this that I am keenly aware from the outset, of the danger of seeing only what I want to see and to not be open to the possibility of convergent data, particularly given the 'mutually constructed' nature of interviews carried out within a constructivist framework (Silverman, 2014, p174).

The textual analysis of the headship packs focuses on the frequency of terms, which provided potential codes to be compared in the wider context of the rest of data gathered. Once the key themes and codes have been established when analysing the interview data it is possible to look at some of the terms from the headship pack data to see what comparisons might be made with the interview data. In order to consider the best approach when analysing the interview data I considered the implications of a number of different methods. For example, the comparison of the textual analysis

data with data from the main interview schedule could follow the Constant Comparative Method by repeatedly going through and coding the data separately, then looking for agreement and disagreement and noting its significance (Thomas, 2016, p205). This results in gathering together some quotations from the interviews under a number of heading, these included 'Role of headteacher', 'Recruitment materials' and 'Leadership Identity' (see Appendix H).

In this context, recognizing core elements within the interview transcripts produced data, which is, in the words of Bryman, 'potential indicators of concepts, and the indicators are *constantly compared* to see which concepts they best fit with' (2016, p573). I explore a number of different approaches to see what adopting this approach would mean when it came to the interview data. For example, the development of coding could then take the form of axial coding in that it would be carried out 'by linking codes to contexts, to consequences, to patterns of interaction and to causes' (Bryman, 2016, p574, outlining Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Exploration of the axial coding could then lead to Selective Coding, which would allow for focus on 'core categories' (2016, p575). An initial examination of this process might look at codes that relate to identity, characteristics, and an examination of leadership as had been seen in headship definitions. This can then be compared with the research questions to see whether the combination of data was providing possible answers. This took into account not only the core categories, but also the relationship between them.

As already stated some caution is needed in considering an application of Grounded Theory particularly with the small number of interviews taking place. The construction of theory from the examination of codes and categories needs to take into account existing relevant study, setting this in a wider context and it is also important to recognize the danger of fragmentation. By focusing on very particular details found within the text, the bigger message can be lost, misunderstood or misinterpreted. This is particularly the case when different applicants have very different experiences of the recruitment process. It can also be questioned as to whether this approach sits comfortably with the constructivist framework I have previously explored. If my initial hypothesis is suggesting that headship is a construction of layers of perceptions, then I

have to consider whether the coding process suggests an objective identifiable reality independent of the human perception. Instead, there is no objective reality of the correct leader to appoint to the post. The alternative is the constructivist view with its expectation of 'multiple identities' and in this case, multiple possibilities of leader. (Arthur et al., 2012, p16). Accepting this research position, what needs to happen is to take into account every detail of the process so that meaning associated with nuance is not lost.

Therefore instead I consider adopting a purely thematic analytical approach, which looks at the relationship between the different codes identified within the collection of interviews. The identification of themes works alongside the research questions to enrich possible answers to them, but would not be identical with them. For example, the question framework asks the participants about their experiences of the headship recruitment process, but each of these interviews reveals more of their own lives, so for example, elements of selection process are discussed, but the interviewees' discussion of them often says more of their own perspective and experience than the post itself.

Silverman suggests three key issues to bear in mind, citing Wilkinson (2011), when working with thematic analysis: '1. How to select the material to present? 2. How to give due weight to the specific context within which the material generated? 3. How best to prioritize participants' orientations in presenting an interpretative account?' (2014, p214). Even with the first interviews, particular themes were beginning to emerge. These included, the role of headship, the route to headship, what experience is valuable and how is it valuable, the strengths and weaknesses of the existing recruitment process and how this might suit some more than others, and the place of mentoring in education. Whilst these are working alongside the research questions they are not identical to them. Citing Ryan and Bernard (2003), Bryman outlines the range of ways thematic analysis can be approached, looking for 'repetitions', indigenous categories', 'metaphors and analogies', 'transitions', 'similarities and differences', 'linguistic connectors', 'missing data' and 'theory-related material' (2016,

p586). This extended analysis may allow for greater comparisons with other data analysis in the research.

The final method of analysis that I have considered is Narrative Analysis. This approach is considered due to the use of a multiple case study design (Yin, 2014, Stake, 2006) producing a number of different accounts of peoples' experiences. In analyzing the interview material it is possible to see the difference implied by Bryman's explanation that narrative analysis shows that 'the focus of attention shifts from 'what actually happened?' to 'how do people make sense of what happened?' (2016, p589). This can be considered as although different roles are being covered, the question framework relates to each individual, as they have had experience of the recruitment process. As Bryman suggests, 'while stories can arise out of answers to questions that are not designed to elicit a narrative, certain kinds of question are especially likely to elicit them' (2016, p590). Whilst the framework is not intended to prompt the sharing of life stories it is not surprising that, given the subject of this research, some interviewees will share their life experiences and therefore analysis should take account of this. Given the different perspectives covered, however, it could be that as a whole analysis approach too much would be lost of the non-narrative content. What might be better would be to incorporate the narrative aspect to some responses in a thematic analysis. Another reason why this could be a difficult choice is the importance of ethical issues in light of the sample size. With it being vitally important to protect the identities of those being interviewed some of that individual story needs to be protected as it could reveal too much about the specific candidate, particularly given the small world of those applying for senior leadership positions. I have attempted to steer a middle path through these methods of analysis taking account of the potential dangers.

To aid the process of analysing the interview data I decide to make use of the N-Vivo software, which is an example of software to enable CAQDAS (Computer assisted qualitative data analysis). Use of this kind of software makes it easier with a number of tasks outlined in Cohen, Manion and Morrison including 'for search and retrieval of text…to code data…to arrange codes into hierarchies…to conduct content analysis…to draw conclusion and to verify conclusions and hypotheses [and] to quote data in the

final report' (2011, p542f). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) go on to reference Gibbs (2007) in identifying use of specific software including N-Vivo, in particular that it allows the researcher to 'import, work with and display rich texts' and it also enables the researcher to 'code text into key codes (nodes) and to arrange codes and nodes into hierarchies, clusters' (2011, p544). I recognised in the process, of moving from data to recognition of patterns and themes to developing the analysis, that this software is not doing the work for me, but is a tool to enable different ways of examining the data to make analysis easier. However, it still remains a tool rather than an ideas generator and it is important that it does not result in a sense of being distanced from the data (Gibbs, 2007, p106). The use of this software also serves as a timely reminder of the possible dangers of using coding to analyse the interview data. Louis, Manion and Morrison (2011) highlight that the analysis is only as good as the reading and coding of it, especially given the subjective nature of that interpretation.

The semi-structured interview framework works in conjunction with the research questions. The research questions are as follows,

1. How do applicants perceive the role of headteacher presented in the recruitment process & what perception of headship can we take from this?

2. Do applicants think that current recruitment processes allow for a fair opportunity for them to present their potential leadership identity?

3. What opportunities should exist to allow aspiring applicants to develop their sense of leadership identity?

The first aspect of the interview framework (see Appendix E for the Interview Framework) looks at the difficulty of recruiting headteachers. This covers the changing role of headship and what went into the presentation of the role in the initial materials. These areas link directly to the first research question looking at perceptions of headship and how these are presented. Within the first aspect of the interview framework there are also questions relating to the shortlisting process and other elements of the process before interviews takes place. These questions link to the second and third research questions.

The second aspect of the interview framework concerns what is being looked for in terms of leadership. The additional questions in this section relate to the selection process, whether a consideration of traits is considered relevant, the training and support of applicants in school, and includes consideration of whether more can be done in schools regarding mentoring. These areas relate to all of the research questions. For example, the question relating to traits contributes an answer to the first research question considering perceptions of headship. The questioning also links to the best way to prepare for headship, which links to underpinning ideas of leadership identity, how that is developed and how it is potentially recognized in the selection process.

The final section of the interview framework looks at levels of confidence in the process. The follow up questions are linked to evaluating the recruitment process, in particular how useful the panel interview is, how important is it that the process is fair and how can this be ensured, as well as an opportunity for additional suggestions to be made. This links to all the questions, but links to the second and third in particular.

3.7 How the different aspects work together

The information gathered from the Online Questionnaire of Aspiring Heads and the textual analysis of the Headship Recruitment packs proved to be more useful to the overall discussion and so rather than only use the data gathered to underpin the Semi-Structured Interviews it has been included here in its own right, as part of the overall findings and discussion. The follow-up questioning that forms the basis of the semi-structured interviews is directed to a small group of applicants. By incorporating the findings from all three collections of data it allows for internal comparisons to be made, to cross reference emerging themes through use of these different approaches.

The underlying research design is all about accessing different perspectives and understanding human behaviours and with providing triangulation, with different perspectives, via different methods, on the same research questions, it is then possible to see what coheres and where views are not compatible. At this point it is worth

remembering that the goal of triangulation is not necessarily a reinforcement of the same position, as that would be at odds with the interpretivist view of reality. Instead it is about coherence of statements to construct a view of reality that hangs together. As Silverman suggests, 'constructionists will prefer to reveal how particular social phenomena are put together through particular interactions' (2014, p92). What is significant about this compatibility is that a successful appointment is often dependent upon there being successful communication between these different parties and if there are potentially incompatible views here, it can explain some difficulties with appointing. If there is coherence then it can be argued that one method of data is able to provide insight into information gained from another method. As Brundrett and Rhodes suggest it is the existence of triangulation within interpretivist data that is likely to add to its 'credibility and trustworthiness' (2014, p16).

3.8 Validity and Reliability

With the appointment of headteachers there is always a difficulty in being able to establish causal relationships with confidence. Why is one person considered to be a better appointment than another? As has been discussed in the literature chapter, the notion of 'best fit' can have its own hidden agenda and yet, in these days of disclosure, recruiters have to be in a position to justify their decisions. This has been one approach to stamp out the 'overt discrimination' (2007, p385) that Coleman has previously explored. However, it can be argued that legitimate reasons can be given to justify appointment decisions and yet the true reasons remain cloaked. Therefore it is not surprising that to try to research with any validity what is in essence a highly subjective process, made up of subjective experiences, makes it difficult for any general observations to be established. Silverman also raises the challenge that 'what people say in answer to interview questions does not have a stable relationship to how they behave in naturally occurring situations' (2014, p90). In this way you can see why Cohen, Manion and Morrison reference 'Maxwell, echoing Mishler (1990)' suggesting 'that "understanding" is a more suitable term than "validity" in qualitative research (2011, p180).

This is also the case with regard to the findings, in that it is important to not just establish incorrect causal relationships. As this research relies upon the bringing together of different views, any construction of argument or judgment needs to be fully transparent. I need to carefully establish what can be inferred from this small-scale study about the entire process. Silverman might agree with this viewpoint in saying that we must guard against making what he calls 'a spurious correlation' and reinforces the point to be cautious of making unsubstantiated causal relationships (2014, p90). Given that all schools are different, it could also be argued that all appointments are unique processes and so the attempt to draw together some generalized observations is challenging. Much of the data collected is essentially descriptive and therefore it would be easy for the end of the report to still be focused on the process rather than on what the process is attempting to achieve. One reason for this is to acknowledge that given my research position I am part of the process that I am researching. Therefore perhaps what can be established is a commentary on the observations to show a deeper understanding of the various stages of the appointment process.

What has been included is that I have fully disclosed my own position, values and experience and the impact of these in terms of the research that has been carried out. I also made the decision to keep the data generated from earlier research as a way to triangulate information gained from the interviews. However, if there are echoes of this view generated by the data from the textual analysis of the headship recruitment packs this is more fully supported. In this way triangulation does not fully validate the research, but it does increase its potential value in the insight it may offer.

3.9 Ethics

As already mentioned, the process of recruiting a headteacher is a very stressful and emotional one. Throughout this research project, I am committed to carrying out my work in an ethical manner in every aspect. Ethics plays a central role to the appointment process, which represents a massive investment of time, energy and money for all of those involved and can be pivotal in the life of a school. It is also an

area of employment that has important legal considerations, for example, the ever-changing requirements of safeguarding laws (DfE, 2014) and changes to staffing and equal opportunities guidance (HM Government, School Staffing Regulations, 2003). In order to keep within legal frameworks, conversations about recruitment can be minimal in response to ensure compliance. Therefore, it is important to ensure that my research receives ethical agreement to give participants confidence that they can safely take part.

Whilst it may not be immediately apparent that potential interviewees are possibly vulnerable, given that they can choose to participate or not, it is still important to ensure that no harm comes to those who agree to be a part of the research. I witnessed a conversation on Twitter where a senior leader talked of feeling betrayed upon receiving a copy of a research paper where he and colleagues had agreed to participate, with anonymity guaranteed. Although their identities had been kept anonymous, within the scope of the research and the inclusion of particular details from interviews, this senior leader felt it was very easy to identify, not only the school, but also those taking part. This highlights the need to ensure not only anonymity, but also to take care with specific details however small and apparently insignificant. Of particular importance at this stage is the need to protect their identities. As already indicated this is a far more complex process than merely withholding names. Interviewees will need to be confident that their participation will not have a detrimental effect on their future career decisions, their educational establishment and their own reputations.

Ethical considerations are taken into account with the construction of the online questionnaire. A number of universities and organisations, in this country and abroad, have now published sample informed consent forms for online surveys (for example, De Montfort University, 2015, University of Portsmouth, 2015, SAGE, 2015). I have adapted from these to ensure that the rights of those participating are protected; this text is included in the questionnaire (see Appendix A). This is incorporated into the questionnaire itself, which means that participants were only able to see the questionnaire through their agreement. However, once they had agreed they were still able to specify whether they were happy with their comments being used in the

research. Also, it was still entirely up to them as to whether they chose to answer the individual questions, which is why different numbers of respondents answered different questions. Participants were also given the option to take part in future research, which some did agree to by submitting their personal email information.

Ethical considerations were also taken into account with the collection of data relating to the headship recruitment packs. The identity of the schools involved, in the review of headship recruitment packs, was protected to ensure that individual judgments of particular schools were not made. None of the schools were named and their geographical location was approximate in order to not give away their precise identity. Part of the criteria for inclusion was that the information was freely available via the Internet.

With the participants of the semi-structured interviews specific ethical guidelines were provided for each interviewee. Each participant completed a consent form (see Appendix G) that indicates that they have received an information leaflet (see Appendix F) outlining the nature and purpose of the research. The document also indicates that the interview will be recorded and that their anonymity will be safeguarded. Each interviewee has the option of being kept up to date with the progress of the research and that they can receive a written summary of the research. These materials are based upon the templates that are accessible via the Open University Research Ethics website (Open University, 2017). I was also able to ensure that I followed relevant sets of guidelines regarding the practice of conducting interviews (Open University, 2014, BERA, 2011).

Ethical approval was granted by the Open University Human Resources Ethical Committee and this was with particular attention to how data would be safely stored, for example, interview recordings kept as a password protected on an external hard drive. Also it needed to be clear that I was not now or in the future likely to be in a position of power over any of the participants, for example as an employing headteacher. It was explained that this would not be the case.

4. Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Online Survey of Aspiring Heads

What was originally designed as an experimental way of sampling the views of aspiring heads ended up generating a lot more data than was first anticipated. The range of questions has been particularly useful in beginning to research the first of the research questions, how do applicants perceive the role of headteacher presented in the recruitment process & what perception of headship can we take from this? The particular answers generated are from one specific perspective, that of the aspiring head who is looking at different presentations of headship roles and responding to them as part of their Recruitment Actions (see 2.5.1).

Respondents were asked their opinion about the importance of various different elements of the recruitment process (see Figure 4.1, p105). This included the presentation of the role in the recruitment materials that come as part of the initial enquiry. Interestingly 14 out of the 36 respondents think that the headship brochure was only somewhat useful, whereas 15 people think the Job Description was extremely important and 16 think that the Person Specification was also extremely important. The only other aspects that were rated as key were the school website, 15 see this as important and an additional 12 feel this was extremely important, and a visit to the school itself, with 24 respondents thinking this is extremely important, is by far the most important aspect.

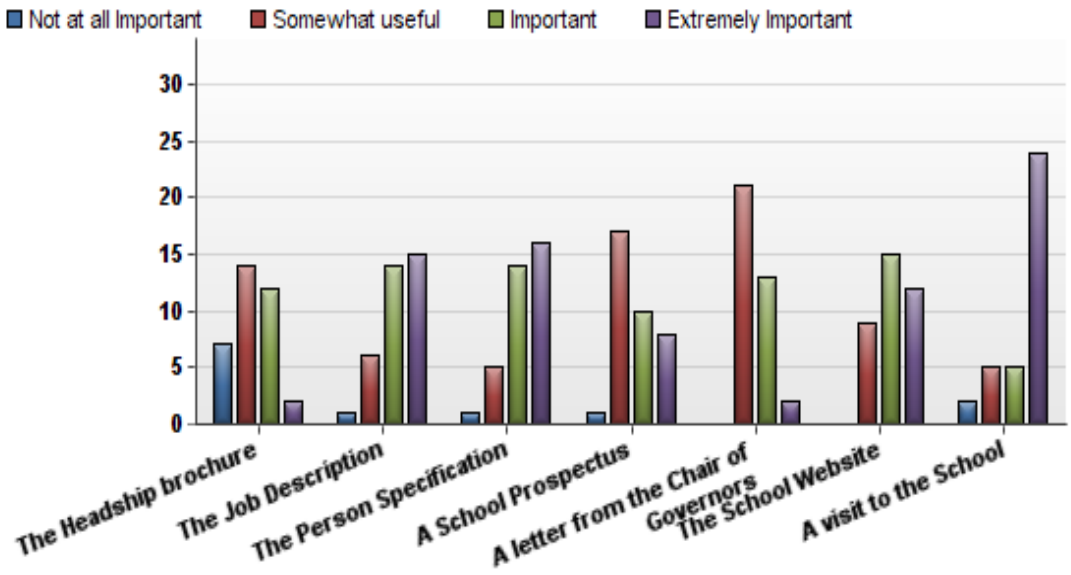


Figure 4.1 *Survey answers to 'How important are the following factors for you to consider applying for a headship post?'*

These answers give some insight into views from potential applicants regarding how the role is presented in the first instance. An additional question was asked about qualities that were considered to be essential for headship. When asked about qualities needed, 29 of the respondents answered the question and the two that prompted the highest response were 'Good Communicator' and 'Resilience' where 27 and 26 people regarded these as 'crucial'. Other qualities that also prompted a 'crucial' response were 'Values' (24 picks), 'Judgement', 'Good Listener' and 'Enthusiasm' (all 22 picks).

The second research question that has been partially investigated using the Online Survey is, do current recruitment processes allow for a fair identification of transition? When asked whether they felt the selection process itself was fair the applicants gave a fairly even spread of response. Approximately half the respondents felt that it was essentially fair, but eight candidates felt that it depended on different circumstances, for example, the experience of the governors, the presence or not of an internal candidate, and the school itself. Only three candidates suggested that the selection process was unfair, although another candidate did say, 'I hope that it is fair but I do worry as a young female that I may be overlooked in favour of older men!' (see Appendix A, p169, no.2).

The second half of my recruitment model focuses on the selection process, in particular the applicants' perceptions of the effectiveness of the different selection elements in recognising the leadership potential of applicants. This was also raised in the online survey with the question, how effective do you think the following aspects of the selection process are for establishing potential leadership and suitability (see Figure 4.2 p107)? The answers raised some interesting results for comparison with the final data analysis of the interviews. This question was answered by 29 respondents and the element that the majority thought was most effective was the panel interview. Already in reviewing the literature, I have seen that the panel interview is one of the more questionable elements. For example, Walker and Kwan report that from their research investigations there was 'a general feeling that the panel had already targeted the person they wanted to employ before the interview and that they were only invited to participate to fulfil legal requirements and give the appearance of "fairness"' (2012, p199). This seems to resonate with the applicant mentioned previously who feels that she was potentially likely to be overlooked in favour of her male counterparts (see Appendix A, p169, no.2). Walker and Kwan also suggest that 'selection panels saw themselves as professional, competent, and fair. Whereas such confidence may well be supported by experience, it may also interfere with their willingness to accept critique of their performance and decisions' (2012, p199). This prompts further questions as part of the semi-structured interview format regarding consistency and fairness.

The elements considered the next most effective parts of the process, according to headship applicants, are the Application Letter and the Conversations with the Governors in an informal sense, as in not as part of an interview. This raises some potential interesting areas for comparison with the interview data. One respondent said that 'Shortlisting based purely on a paper application seems the most unfair part of the process' (Appendix A, p169, no.9). Reasons for this being unfair already considered are that this could particularly favour or hinder certain candidates, because of the written nature of the task (Blackmore et al., 2006). Therefore it is not just what the element is, but how it is used as part of the overall judgment. The elements of the process that are considered to be least effective, with cumulative scores of the categories 'Neither Effective nor Ineffective', 'Ineffective' and 'Very Ineffective', are

Role Playing Exercises and Psychological Testing. Both of these elements had a cumulative score of 16 out of the 29 respondents.

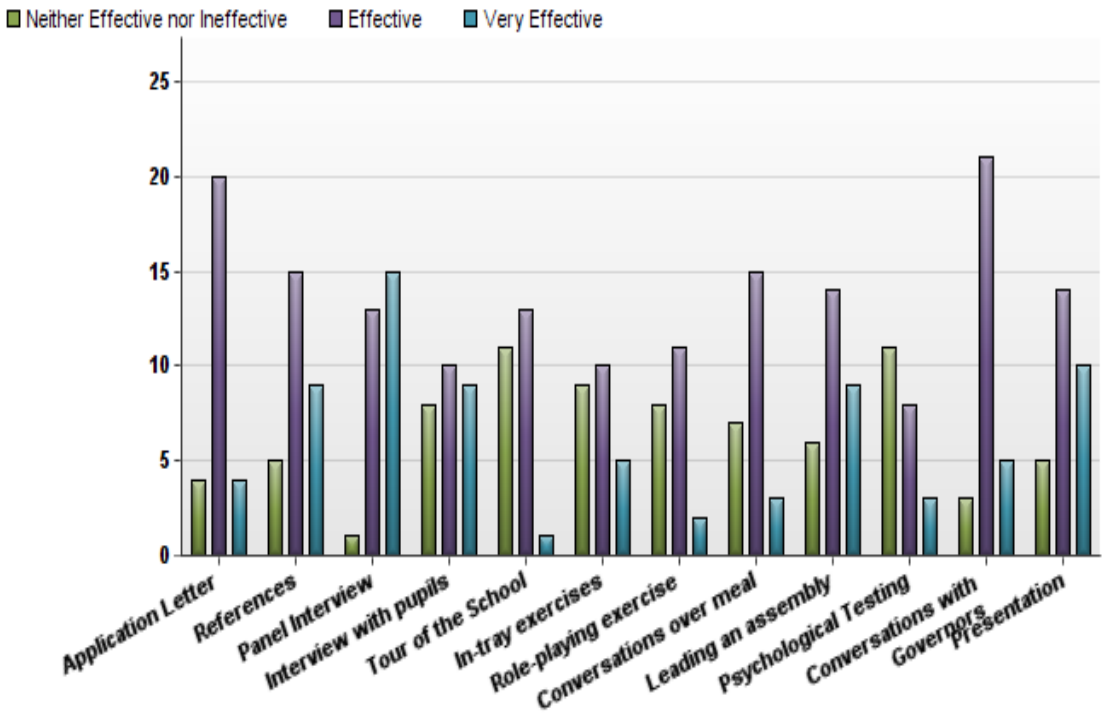


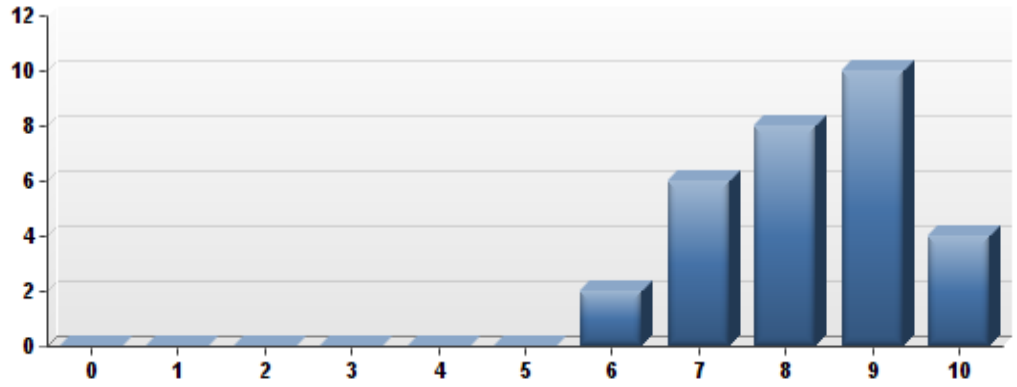
Figure 4.2 *Filtered survey answers on what was thought to Very Effective, Effective or no impact as part of the selection process*

One respondent to my online questionnaire talks about the disappointment felt when in two different interviews they were sent home at the end of an interview day with little or no explanation regarding choices or intentions (see Appendix A, p170, no.26). That points to a lack of clarity, having gone through the whole process, which suggests that communication of identity has, at the very least, not been acknowledged; potentially a downward spiral (Day et al., 2009, p185). Overall most respondents give some kind of conditional answer when asked whether they thought the selection process was fair. A couple said they thought it was fair, only one said 'very' and another's answer, whilst acknowledging fairness still said, ' I think it's fair, but it often isn't very effective or imaginative' (see Appendix A, p169, no.22).

For question 15 the respondents were asked whether they felt that applying for a headship post required any kind of identity shift. This prompted 32 participants to respond and 23 of them agreed that an identity shift was required. The follow up question to this required them to drag a bar to indicate their response to what extent

they thought they had already mentally shifted from seeing themselves as a teacher (1) to seeing themselves as a headteacher (10). I expected some kind of bell curve response with an average of five in that I expected responses to be pretty centrally located with regard to the sense of identity. This may be because I had thought people would be at different stages of the application process, some just beginning and some having already attended some interviews and perhaps wondered if the sense of identity would reflect this. Here 30 teachers responded to this question and the results can be seen in Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 *Filtered survey answers indicating to what extent the respondents had already mentally shifted from seeing themselves as a teacher (1) to seeing themselves as a headteacher (10).*



These results are interesting to me as the curve, as it does exist, is higher up the scale than I had anticipated. This suggests that to be at the point of being ready to apply for a headship post the mental shift is already significantly underway. This is a reflection of what Miscenko, Guenter and Day refer to as the identity 'strength' as the 'extent to which an individual identifies as a leader' (2017, p2). It makes sense if the sense of leadership identity has to be well established to prompt someone even to have a go at applying for a headship post.

When asked the best way to convey that identity through the selection process, several respondents said via delivering a presentation. Other answers were less specific, either suggestions through some kind of interactive activity, or by 'being honest' or talking

'with passion' (see Appendix A, p170). Having said that, despite the apparent conviction regarding potential leadership identity, it is interesting to note that the majority of applicants have not undertaken a professional headship qualification.

When asked for suggestions for potential improvements to the process, the responses were varied. A few seemed to suggest that the process itself was drawn out and could be shortened in some way; others suggested the inclusion of a visit to the applicant's current school (see Appendix A, p170).

4.2 Headship Job Application packs

The information gathered from this analysis of headship materials proved to be more useful to the overall discussion and so rather than only use data gathered to support the interviews, it has been included here in its own right as part of the overall findings and discussion. These responses perhaps also reflect key differences between this research on job application materials, with previous papers (Foster, 1996, Kirkham, 2000, Thomson, 2009), in that the information regarding potential posts is now far more accessible. Until recent years, it was common that these materials would not be accessible without a recording an interest in the post. With the detailed information available through school websites, which themselves would not have existed at the times of the previous research, and with relevant materials often being available for immediate download, more people can look whilst considering applying without having to register a serious interest.

After initially reading the headship materials from all 30 schools, I decide to focus on the two aspects that were common to all packs: the Person Specification and the Job Description. One reason for this was despite the diverse presentations of the headteacher post, these two aspects featured consistently in all of them. In terms of names for the post, 14 referred to 'Headteacher', eight to 'Head', seven to 'Principal' and one to 'Executive Principal'. There were a few times when the Job Description was referred to by a less formal name such as 'The Role' 'Key Responsibilities' or 'Core Purpose'. These are two aspects where considerable thought and process may have

gone into their construction in order to represent the post in the best way possible. It is then possible to use original material for frequency analysis using N-Vivo (QSRInternational, 2014) software.

I looked at the Person Specification and Job Specification separately to analyse frequency of terms (see Appendices C and D). Not surprisingly the most common word was the same in both documents; 'school' appeared 187 times in 30 person specifications and 561 times in 30 job descriptions. However, it was the next most common words that revealed more of the underlying ideas within the documents. Certainly in my word frequency analysis of all 30 person specifications, 'experience' is the second most common word and occurred in 27 of the 30 documents, appearing 131 times. The next four most frequent terms also give an indication of priorities. The third most common word is 'ability' (102 times), the fourth word is 'leadership' (77 times) and the fifth word is 'skills' (68 times). Foster observes that for the larger schools in his county it is expected that applicants would have already had experience of headship and notes that 'to some governors the management experience offered by a person being a headteacher might be preferred over the deputy head option' (1996, p108).

What is perhaps surprising is a comparison of the use of the word 'vision' in the person specification. This occurs in 16 of the 30 person specifications and only appears once in 13 of those documents rather than as a key focus. In Thomson's survey she notes that '68 [out of 185] schools required a head with vision and nine someone a visionary' (2009, p50). The word 'visionary' occurs only once, in one school's person specification in my sample. In terms of personal qualities, which would be thought to feature as part of the person specification, Thomson noted that 65 wanted enthusiasm and energy' (2009, p50). Kirkham observed that 20 per cent of his schools wanted someone who 'communicated…energetically' (2000, p21). When I looked at the 30 person specifications, the word 'enthusiasm' appeared 12 times in 11 of them. 'Motivate' appeared 13 times across the schools, 'humour' appeared only ten times, 'energy' appeared only five times and 'energetic' only three times in my sample. Initially this would suggest that the emphasis is on experience, ability and skills, which

mirrors the emphases, found in NPQH modules (DfE, 2014, updated 2015), on acquiring knowledge and skills, rather than recognising and developing personal characteristics.

Given my interest in the values that could underpin headship (see 1.2), I want to see if there is any evidence of this in the way in which the headship role is portrayed. I thought that mention of values might be more present in documents from the faith-based school, however this was not seen to be the case. By contrast, Thomson in 2009 went as far as saying that 'schools required some kind of articulated moral basis for leadership' (p49), this being one of her findings. In my sample the word 'moral' appeared only twice, once in two schools and 'values' appeared in only nine school documents, occurring 12 times in total. I finally wanted to see if there are observations to be made of the occurrence or non-occurrence of terms, related to the conceptual framework of the changing identity, for example, identity, personality, self. 'Personality' occurs only once, 'self' occurs five times (when not used in conjunction with phrases such as self-evaluation or self-improving) and identity did not appear once.

Again the implications are worth considering that the language used to describe leadership posts is currently not concerned with notions of self or identity. This seems to reinforce that the focus of these documents is on what the successful applicant will do instead of who the applicant is and what the applicant brings with them in terms of their sense of self. This is not to suggest that experience should be ignored, but rather it is the relationship between the applicants' experience and the way in which this has been reflected on. This is one way in which there is a clear distinction between the findings of this set of materials compared with earlier studies. It is interesting to discover that a recent on-going research project, focusing on content analysis of job advertisements for headteachers in Wales during 2016 to 2017, presented at the 2018 BELMAS conference, has also considered the way in which the headship recruitment materials provide 'an understanding of the range of attributes, skills and competencies that are considered essential' (Milton et al., 2018). Early findings suggest that there are 'critical gaps between a policy direction in Wales…and the current articulation of skills and attributes' (Milton et al., 2018). The focus of my research with this data has looked

at the portrayal of the role of headteacher in English documentation, the way in which this is portrayed in this sample of job descriptions and person specification, and that gaps also appear to exist in terms of perceptions of headship, views of the materials themselves and the way in which this content has changed. That terms such as identity, self and personality are either omitted or less frequent clearly indicates a particular portrayal of the role of headteacher.

Looking at the person specifications, it is possible to make some comparisons with the earlier studies, whilst noting that they are analysing advertisements rather than the materials I have looked at as part of the recruitment packs. Kirkham (2000) looks at 'Personal descriptors' and notes that 'more than half of the governing bodies (52.1%) value 'leadership skills', which is only exceeded (54.5%) by having 'vision' and most often such vision has to be 'clear'' (2000, p21). Thomson (2009) noted that 'only 72 of the advertisements specified senior management experience and/or proven track records in leadership and management at senior levels' (2009, pp48f). Foster (1996) looks at the advertisements, but also looked at the person specifications. Foster observes that from comparing both sets of literature that 'the stress in all schools is the track record of candidates and this is indicated by reference to previous experience as a head or deputy in a primary school', 'most posts ask for headship or deputy headship experience, governors might implicitly prefer headship experience' (1996, p107).

Looking at the Job Descriptions there is an opportunity to see what the perceived priorities are in terms of headship within my sample. The second most common word in the job descriptions perhaps gives an indication of the responsibility associated with the post of headship; 'ensure' occurs 223 times across 25 of the job descriptions, with it occurring 20 times on one of the documents. It is surprisingly that this occurs even more times than the number three word, 'staff', occurring 205 times. The balance in the job descriptions seems to slightly lean towards 'management' (occurring 105 times) rather than 'leadership' (89 occurrences). It is also interesting to compare that 'vision' occurs 62 times in the job descriptions compared to 19 occurrences in the person specification. Does this imply that it is more important for the applicant to adopt the school's vision rather than they have their own?

Comparing the word frequency with that found in the 'National standards of excellence for headteachers' (DfE, 2015), 'standards' occurs in the document 68 times and in the Job Descriptions it occurs 66 times. Looking at the wording of the overview of the NPQH modules (DfE, 2014 updated 2015), the most common words apart from 'school' are 'learn', 'improvement', 'curriculum' and 'change'. In the job descriptions these occur 'learn' only six times, 'improvement' 49 times, 'curriculum' 60 times and 'change' only 12 times, although 'development' occurs 147 times, the sixth most frequent word. Again, considering some of the words associated with my conceptual framework it is interesting to see that 'personality' does not occur in the standards, the overview of the NPQH modules (DfE, 2014, updated 2015) or the job descriptions. This could well reflect a shift in the role of the headteacher compared to earlier studies. It is worth noting also that, 'self' does not occur in the sense of the individual in either the standards or the NPQH, but does occur eight times in the Job Descriptions, often in the context of the need to develop ones self and others. 'Identity' only appears in the Job Descriptions and then only once in the context of a school's Christian Identity not the Leader's. Again, this seems to suggest that there is less concern with the head as an individual and more concern for they are going to come and do in the school. Bryman raises the way in which content analysis may be used to uncover 'latent content' (2016, p290), that is to say meaning lying beneath the text, or to identify themes, which otherwise may not be obvious, for example through frequency of terms.

Comparing the results from the online questionnaire, I looked for the qualities that had been identified as being significant. The applicants considered 'Good Communicator' as crucial, and whilst 'communicator' only appears twice across 30 person specifications, 'communication' does appear 21 times. 'Resilience' is also considered important, but only appears six times across 30 person specifications ('resilient' appearing an additional three times). From these comparisons it appears that there are potentially some discrepancies between how the role is perceived by those applying, with how it is being presented in the recruitment process. Some of these frequency terms lend themselves to be considered when coding the data generated by the interviews.

Thomson (2009) summarises what schools are looking for, from her analysis of advertisements. Key ideas that continue today are 'they wanted a head who would help them change a little…would help them to be measurably improved' (2009, p49). However, what is not evident from my investigation is an equivalent search, as the one Thomson refered to, of schools looking for 'some kind of articulated moral basis for leadership' and that they 'valued charisma over collaboration' with schools specifying 'specific personal qualities', particularly 'enthusiasm' and 'energy' (2009, pp49f). Gunter (2016) discusses the knowledge traditions associated with the expectations of school leadership. Gunter, referencing Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) looks at the principal as the 'keeper of the vision' (2016, p54 citing Leithwood et al., 1999, p60) and at the same time references the integral role that values play in the practice of principals. However, even from the analysis of my sample of 30 person specifications and 30 job descriptions, it is quite clear that neither vision nor values play any kind of significant role in the thinking behind the search for these headship posts. *Values* are mentioned 12 times in 30 person specifications and this is often in relation to the schools' values, not necessarily as something being looked for in a candidate. *Vision* is mentioned 19 times across 30 person specifications compared to 131 counts of the word *experience*. This is why looking at these documents is important, as they are a reflection of the schools' expectations for the next Head. It is not a question of being the best possible headteacher rather the right person for that post. So perhaps it is primarily about being the 'best fit'.

4.3 Interview Data

I want to continue to build the layers of perceptions of headship, primarily involving fieldwork focusing on people, so conducting semi-structured interviews with applicants, logically makes sense. The majority of the interviews have ended up being conducted via Skype, some with and some without camera. What Bryman has said about Skype interviews being easier to decline (2016) has been true in a couple of instances where initial agreement then changed and perhaps would have not happened had a date for a face-to-face interview had been made involving my travelling to the participant. This means that I was eventually able to interview four people in total. The quality of the recording does also have implications when it comes to transcribing the interviews, some were harder than others to revisit.

The existing data raises some interesting contrasts in terms of expectations of the role from those aspiring to headship, with how this has been presented in the recruitment pack and with previous research in this area. With regard to coding options I looked at terms that had taken on some significance from the quantitative data analysis. So, for example, in the interviews I looked at how many times certain terms relating to characteristics of a leader, 'vision', 'communicator', 'enthusiastic', 'values', 'resilience' and 'identity', were referenced. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and looking at what was said by the interviewees, two terms were mentioned more than the others. 'Vision' was mentioned the most, 26 times, by all four of the interviewees. 'Experience' was also mentioned a significant number of times, 20 times and again each interviewee mentioned it at least once, which is in keeping with the prominence of 'experience' in the analysis of the job descriptions and person specifications. Only two of the applicants mentioned 'values', but one did mention it eight times in their interview. Interestingly, 'enthusiasm' and 'resilience' were not mentioned at all. 'Communicator' or something related to 'communication' was mentioned by three of the four interviewees, but only one of them mentioned it significantly, referencing it six times and 'identity' was only mentioned once despite it being frequently referenced as part of the question structure. It was mentioned in relation to the school's identity and not the leader. Given that this is the analysis of qualitative data, the identification of terms is the first step. This first step of textual analysis allowed me to make further comparisons between the data from the online questionnaire and the headship packs with the interview data.

As soon as I started accumulating interview data, I began to look at the findings from the interviews, for example the frequency of terms or ideas and used thematic analysis, sorting key ideas against nine headings (see Appendix H, p180 for sample quotations). Having identified these areas I am able to compare these with findings from the other two sets of data, as well as review the different perspectives that have been covered. Once these themes have been considered it enables me to begin to make some preliminary judgments in response to the research questions. This is how the thematic analysis fits with the research questions:

- How do applicants perceive the role of headteacher presented in the recruitment process & what perception of headship can we take from this?
    - *Role of headteacher*
    - *Recruitment materials*
    - *Applicants*
- Do applicants think that current recruitment processes allow for a fair opportunity for them to present their potential leadership identity?
    - *Leadership identity*
    - *Shortlisting*
    - *Experience*
    - *Gender*
    - *Applicants*
- What opportunities should exist to allow aspiring applicants to develop their sense of leadership identity?
    - *Selection Process*
    - *Applicants*
    - *Vision*

4.3.1 How do applicants perceive the role of headteacher presented in the recruitment process & what perception of headship can we take from this?

The first research question considers how the role of headteacher is currently presented in the recruitment process. In particular the interviewees are asked whether they think much has changed in recent years regarding the way in which the role is presented along with the profile of candidates that are going for headship. What is quite surprising is that most answers were confidently delivered and quite definite and yet there was no overall agreement. One of the respondents thought that the profile of heads has not changed particularly over recent years although they said that what they were asked to do has changed. This of course implies straight away that there is a distinction between the person that is the head and the job that they undertake, which is worth noting. From those saying no, regarding changes to the role of the head, the overall impression is that the tasks have changed and the pressures surrounding the

role have changed, but the people have not. The person and the role are two distinct entities; perhaps it is easier for applicants to see themselves independently to the post. There seems to be some agreement amongst the applicants that the role of headteacher is far less about working with people as a kind of figurehead than it used to be. One applicant says that because of this it did change the type of person likely to go for the post. However, there were a couple of applicants who appear to suggest that the changes might mean that certain people would now be put off applying. One applicant said, 'I think probably in the past you were judged more on how outward looking you were, how good were in public, that sort of thing, so yeah I suspect it's broadened the field probably' (see Appendix H, p180).

Of those who responded yes that the role of the head has changed, the response tends to be quite effusive that there have been considerable changes in recent times. One of the respondents made similar comments to those answering no in saying that the role has become more obviously associated with a business manager style post and the need to have a good understanding of financial acumen was mentioned. One applicant said, 'Historically it used to be about just managing, having a vision of education and now its much more about the management of staff than it ever was' (see Appendix H, p180). This and other comments seem to suggest that the applicants' perception of headship has a greater focus on management than leadership. With regard to a question on whether certain characteristics make a difference to the role of head there are different responses. Applicants responded positively saying that qualities, such as confidence, ambition, to be financially minded and an awareness of self, were important going into an interview. These responses are quite different to the most popular answers in the online survey as has already been seen by the lack of common coding. Overall there is quite a mixed response to this question, which seems to imply that there is still a lack of clarity regarding the role of headteacher.

Given this split over the initial question with regard to the role of head it logically follows that there will also be a similar split in responses with regard to how this role is presented in headship recruitment packs. However, what is particularly striking is that the responses were almost uniform in the lack of importance attached to the way that

the post was presented within the recruitment materials. Some of the applicants assume that the details of job descriptions and person specifications are likely to be generic documents. One applicant said that, 'I don't think the paperwork gives you an insight into how much knowledge you really need at all. I think the application forms all look quite similar and to a point it depends on what interviews you're going for' (see Appendix H, p180). One interviewee did say that the accessibility of the recruitment pack was what diminishes their status in that the documents are freely available in the public domain and so are limited in the amount of information that they can disclose about the school.

These responses make for an interesting comparison with the textual analysis of the headship packs. Admittedly it was not until the documents were analysed together that certain themes were more evident, for example the heavy emphasis on the responsibility of the head. However, it is evident that when comparisons are made with earlier studies that the message within these documents has clearly changed. Far from being a recent innovation, the pack potentially has actually evolved to reflect the changing requirements for the post. The move from a more trait-based call for certain types of head, as evidenced in previous research, to a more standards based focus in terms of content is apparent with this analysis.

What is also apparent from a number of the interviews is that there is evidence from the applicants' experiences to support the difficulty of appointing headteachers with a number of different reasons given for this. Some responses cited education related issues, for example the increase in the number and type of schools making the recruitment process generally far more competitive. Some of the applicants talked about the different sectors, for example, independent schools, multi-academy trusts, grammar schools and that the processes for applying were very different according to the type of school.

4.3.2 Do applicants think that current recruitment processes allow for a fair opportunity for them to present their potential leadership identity?

Applicants talk about the need to show how their experience, whatever form it takes, is relevant for the post. There is some discussion on the route to headship, which seems to be primarily focused on moving from Deputy Head role to headship. One applicant has suggested that in previous years there have been more applicants from other roles such as Assistant Heads, Head of Section or House Parents. The initial coding shows a focus on experience and the frequency that it is mentioned during the interviews is hardly surprising, but there is little mention of a sense of leadership identity. In fact leadership was sometimes talked about in terms of experience as something accumulated. This seems to be distinct from any sense of self-reflection. One applicant even said, 'I've been teaching 28 years and it was only recently that I've started reflecting on when did I start leading?' (Appendix H, p181). This suggests that there can be a better focus on their identity transition, which could help applicants when alternatively their primary focus has been on what they have achieved to date rather than how they have changed. Only one interviewee talked about their own experience of knowing they wanted to be a head very early on in their career with the realization that they then had to work to make that happen. However, one applicant did describe the dual aspect of leadership identity even if it is in a fairly casual manner, both external and internal, that has formed the basis of my definition of identity taken from Gecas (1982) and Ibarra (1999). They said, 'For me, my internal belief that I could do it, came from people externally telling me that I could do it and you're getting reasonably positive feedback from parents and pupils and staff, it you makes you think that yeah ok you might be able to go for it and you have to have a certain amount of self belief, but it has to be founded on an experience so for me the external came first and the internal came after that' (see Appendix H, p181).

There are some interesting responses regarding the shortlisting process. A couple of the applicants felt that there was a danger of always being in the long list and one response was that it was important for applicants to be selective about what they went for, rather than just going for what they were asked to go for by recruiters. The use of criteria was a distinctive element of the shortlisting process. For some this is a

technical process of matching agreed criteria. The use of this approach was quite heavily critiqued by one applicant who felt that their application was not viewed in its own right, aside from being set against criteria. They said, 'they didn't bother reading they weren't interested in the tone or the details they were just looking for evidence that you had achieved those six criteria and it was literally tick, tick, tick' (see Appendix H, p181).

Primarily there is a focus on whether the selection activities themselves are conducted in a fair manner. It seems to fit with findings from the literature review that there is now an emphasis on uniformity of process so that every aspect of the tasks can be seen as being carried out fairly for all candidates. When asked directly about equality and inclusion issues, most felt that if there are still problems they tend to be more indirect. For example one interviewee turned up for one interview with six male colleagues, including a well established internal candidate and then herself and she said her first thought was whether she was the token female. However, there was also recognition, as my conceptual model suggests, that after the shift of power, the applicants are in a much more difficult place to challenge any instances of inequality. One applicant said, 'the interviewers hold all the cards, call the shots, whatever you want. You're in a much weaker position as the candidate' (see Appendix H, p182). It is interesting that whilst gender issues did arise in the interview data there was some uncertainty about how significant this is in the current climate. One of the applicants did suggest that women perhaps were more susceptible to experiencing 'imposter syndrome' (Steward, 2014) and that this could be one of the reasons as to why they were less likely to apply for posts.

When asked their thoughts on aspects of the recruitment and selection process the applicants had some interesting and varied responses. The applicants who felt the panel interview was useful were often those who felt they were good at interviews. Others were not so sure and one applicant felt it was very easy to answer questions according to your current role rather than the one you were applying for. This is clearly something that could be tied in to confusion over their own sense of leadership identity. Some concerns were raised about possible hidden agendas brought into the

panel interview, either because the interviewers had a too fixed idea of what they were looking for or alternatively they had not really thought about what they were looking for. Those who had gone through the interview process themselves suggested alternatives they thought were better, such as an informal conversation or in-tray exercises. Although one applicant said, 'I think that probably the least effective are these in-tray tasks, I don't think they are effective at all. Maybe they are, I don't know, I just think maybe they are a bit old hat now? There are other interesting things that you could be doing' (see Appendix H, p182).

Governor expertise was questioned in some of the interviews and there was an awareness of this being a challenging experience for any appointing body. A couple of the applicants raised concerns over the use of psychometric testing again for different reasons, one said that they didn't trust the results, but that may be because they didn't understand them. All claimed to have had very little contact with them. Another suggested that they could not be used without also having to make use of an expert to decode them for the interviewers. Other activities that have been part of the process that the interviewees felt were important with regard to the headship role were meeting with staff and meeting with students.

It is worth coming back to the topic of feedback at this point. This was not mentioned extensively in the interviews, but one applicant talked about both positive and negative experiences of receiving feedback, but that when it had been given it had been useful and something that they had gone on to act upon. A positive consequence of the selection process being tightly linked to criteria is that this kind of evaluation can at least be given. This can be brought together with data from the online questionnaire. One respondent to my online questionnaire clearly felt disappointment when at the end of the interview day no feedback was offered regarding choices made. Obviously these are referring to entirely different situations, but does highlight how easy it is for there to be misunderstandings regarding the place of feedback in the process. Given that we have established that feedback can play a key role in either the confirmation of leadership identity, a positive or negative spiral (Day et al., 2009), poor or little feedback could have a negative affect on the applicant's sense of leadership self. At

the very least it seems possible for communication on the subject of feedback to lack clarity.

Considering this research question it seems worth reflecting on the responses that were given with regard to the place of vision in terms of presenting their identity. Two of the interviewees felt that a chance to reflect on the values and vision was core for any prospective head and that any training that was undertaken should be for that purpose. One interviewee said that vision was not necessarily a predominant part of the process and that the role today was much more about managing staff. However, they said that their personal 'why' would underpin any project and this was evidence that vision still had a role to play. Another interviewee said that one of the benefits of working with an external recruitment company was that they met with applicants to discuss what their values were and what educational vision meant for them.

An interesting offshoot of the vision questions is that one interviewee said that discussion of understanding the school's vision had been the very thing that had put them off applying for headships within a Multi-Academy Trust (MATs). This idea was raised in different ways by different interviewees who all were hesitant about the need to buy into the philosophy of the MAT in order to be even considered as a potential applicant. A couple of the applicants talked about the changing role of governors within a MAT where they could easily find their appointing status was taken away from them and that the appointing process becomes something internalized to the Trust. The implications for this, for the phenomena of recruiting heads, is significant in that this suggests that the only way to be seriously considered for headship roles within MATs is to start your career within the MAT earlier on and then are encouraged to take on a leadership role through an internalized succession programme. Interviewees felt that there are both positive and negative aspects of this; positive in that leadership is actually being encouraged and promoted within the organisation. However, two interviewees expressed concern for the expectation to act according to the company ethos without the head being able to bring anything of their own vision to the role.

4.3.3 What opportunities should exist to allow aspiring applicants to develop their sense of leadership identity?

When asked for some alternative additions that could be added to improve the process there are some very specific suggestions. A couple of the applicants said that it would be better if they had more direct contact with the school in a practical way, for example, one suggestion was that the Head carries out a Learning Walk in the school and gives feedback, another talked about teaching a lesson and being observed. One anecdote given was of a colleague who had to lead an SLT meeting, although interestingly none of the applicants were called back for the shortlist day after that activity. Another suggestion was that there was an opportunity for a conversation with the governors, not an interview and not chatting over coffee or food, but an informal conversation, a dialogue, where potential misunderstandings or misgivings could be clarified. However, given the need for consistency and transparency it is possible to see why some recruiters might feel that this might be unworkable. Commenting on the need for consistency and transparency, one of the applicants felt that this area of education has been hit in the same way as other areas, in that practices have to cater to the lowest common denominator with regard to understanding.

Every interviewee felt that more could be done to improve the potential effectiveness of the appointment process. For example, one of the interviews referred to other institutions and the way in which they appoint their leaders, most notably the Army in almost identical ways. One interviewee said that they could not understand how the Army could identify leadership potential and then implement an appropriate training program, but that with education there was such a resistance even to the idea of doing so. One applicant said, 'If you were in the Army or in Business there would be a leadership programme from day one and its not there within, if you're not careful, its not there within the institutions, I think that's absolutely right' (see Appendix H, p180).

There seemed to be a couple of ways in which governing bodies underestimated their influence. One was their role in prospective applicants' visits to the school. One interviewee suggested that this was the most influential part of any recruitment process and another went further to suggest that it should be a compulsory part of the

pre-interview process for appointing heads. This of course, agreed with the responses found in the online survey, where the aspiring applicants felt that the visit to the school was extremely important. Another interviewee mentioned the Teach First programme that 'sought to enhance its Leadership Development Programme, relevant to teachers and leaders in all fields, including the development of an optional Masters route (Blandford, 2014, p1) and that governors could do more to promote leadership from the top. Their experience of this, operating in a school they worked in, was that the school created what was called associate SLT roles so that aspiring senior leaders had the opportunity to experience aspects of headship.

Within school processes two other interviewees also said that more should be done to develop training lower down the school. They recognized that this was one of the head's responsibilities to foster leadership in others. Some talked about the importance of supporting the schools' middle managers, others talked about encouraging some specific senior leaders to attend governors' meetings in order to understand the wider workings of the school. One of the interviewees felt that a module on leadership in education should be part of the PGCE. Certainly in a broader sense the idea of mentoring generally came up. One interviewee said that the whole notion of mentoring in schools was somewhat hit and miss. Another talked about there being missed opportunities, that there was no sense of someone spotting leadership potential and acting upon it with teachers and this was said independent to the idea of leadership succession. Another interviewee said that when it came to headteachers themselves, they were good at making sure that they supported each other and that heads would often recommend other heads for key leadership posts. There was certainly some agreement that it was ultimately the head's responsibility to spot potential leaders amongst their staff and to do what they could to train and develop that.

Two of the interviewees talked about the work of #WomenEd (WomenEd, n.d.), an organization that began as part of social media, but now involves regional groups, conferences and networking. They said that organisations such as this were useful in providing mentoring and reinforcing to women that they did have the confidence to go

for certain roles and that it was a way of combating 'imposter syndrome' (Steward, 2014), although there was some suggestion that the use of mentors might make this worse, because women compared themselves less favourably to them (Burkeman, 2013).

Echoing findings from the literature review and data from the online questionnaire, there was a sense that the search for the best fit was about matching a very precise view of what is being looked for either in terms of continuity or a complete change. A couple of the applicants talked about the importance of being themselves in interview. What was interesting was that a couple of the applicants talked about mistakes made of not pitching the application appropriately. One applicant spoke of responding as a Deputy Head and not as a potential Head. They said, 'It was important how I answered interview questions because I was answering them as a deputy and the feedback given to me in a practice interview was governors are looking for the finished article so I had to think as a headteacher to answer the questions so the interviews are more about you being a plausible and reliable headteacher than about all the good stuff you've done at the deputy' (see Appendix H, p181). Again, this seems to link to the notion of applicants needing an opportunity to reflect upon their leadership identity.

With regard to any opportunity to reflect upon their own identity transition, it was interesting to note that a few of the applicants had attended courses to prepare them for headship and for at least one of those that had meant a chance to reflect upon their own values with regard to a possible move to headship. There appeared to be no common ground or language of headship preparation, it seemed to mean different things to different applicants. There was certainly no evidence of a sense of understanding a development of the leadership identity over time and this meant that all the applicants talked about their pathways in very different ways.

4.4 Overview of findings

Comparing and contrasting findings from these different sets of data, it is interesting to note some of the points where there are notable agreements and conflicts. Firstly,

with regard to the role of headteacher, this seems to be approached in entirely different ways. Applicants are happy to consider essential qualities that could easily have been a feature of person specifications ten years ago, for example, the need for the head to be an enthusiastic communicator, using their values to make effective judgments. However, modern recruitment material conveys a different image of the head role with a focus on accountability, skills, and ability that has as its main goal the importance of ensuring improvement and encouraging development. Despite the way in which the role's evolution appears to have been captured quite effectively with job and person specifications, it is interesting to note that current applicants were sometimes quite dismissive about their importance whereas others still found them useful. What came across from looking at all three aspects was that there were mixed views regarding what it was to be a headteacher today with some recognising change has taken place, whereas others felt some aspects of the role had changed, but the person themselves had not. This distinction is not evident in the headship materials. Even suggesting this distinction raises further questions regarding what it means to have a leadership identity.

In terms of the recruitment process again there are mixed responses. The goal of a fair, transparent process has had a significant impact on the activities of the process itself. For example, the use of criteria, particularly as part of the shortlisting process, highlights some of the different perspectives about their efficacy. Applicants often felt that criteria were restrictive and did not allow them to be seen as individuals whereas they appeared to be being used to ensure uniformity. There were also mixed views about the main elements of selection, for example the panel interview, which some applicants felt was very important, but others felt was unrealistic process that had little to with the job itself. This also seemed to echo the findings of Kwan and Walker (2009). Other regular features also prompt mixed responses, for example in-tray exercises were not considered to be particularly useful and psychometric testing was met with some suspicion and resistance, particularly because it was felt to be a specialist area requiring specialist knowledge. Interestingly, alternative activities suggested were almost all more informal, for example informal conversations, informal learning walks and informal visits to current school.

Finally in terms of the person going through this process there was a wide range of views emerging to be discussed further. For example there were different perspectives on the relationship between the applicant and their own vision of education. Some applicants had different views about what part their vision played, others felt that with the increased number of Multi-Academy Trusts there was also an expectation of leaders adopting the philosophy of the organisation, and the accompanying materials certain seem to play down any sense of the individual's moral basis and values. This is stark contrast to a previous review where this was an expected goal of most schools. However applicants still felt that a chance to reflect on their own values was essential and desirable, but it is not clear the part this could play in the process. All of these aspects require further discussion and certainly appear to have significant implications for the preparation of headteachers and other senior leaders.

5. Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Perceptions of the role of headteacher

The first research question asks how applicants perceive the headteacher role and their views on how this is presented as part of the recruitment process. There will be some who feel that definitions of leadership in an educational realm have been looked at from every possible angle and yet it is still an area of change, and development. The language of headship in practice is a patchwork of traits, styles and theories. Whilst some educational theories may come in and out of fashion it is still common for applicants to talk about the essential characteristics for headship. Along with that, there has been an increased focus on the concept of teacher leadership, which also potentially has implications for the leadership application process.

From my findings it appears that the way in which the headteacher role is presented conveys a different view of headship to the one held by many applicants for the post. The view presented has more in common with formal headship preparation courses with their focus on compliance, skills, knowledge and accountability. What appears to have become less important in the way in which the role is presented is the applicant's vision and values. Is the underpinning why still important for those who are appointing headteachers or is the pressure of standards and accountability so great that it is far more desirable that the new incumbent adopts the priorities already put in place?

At present I am suggesting that there are inconsistencies with how leadership is discussed within English secondary schools and even how this relates to the Teaching Standards themselves (Gov.uk, 2017). We now tend to talk of Senior Leadership Teams and yet it is most common to still encounter discussions relating to Middle Management, although a greater discussion of Middle Leadership is beginning to emerge. Training of Middle Leaders is arbitrary and down to the individual school or organisation. We have discussions relating to the importance of acknowledging Teacher Leadership, not least as a way for aspiring heads to be able to extend their experience of leadership and yet there is still no mention of 'leadership', 'leader' or 'to

lead' as part of the Teaching Standards (Gov.uk, 2017). We have programmes in England such as Teach First (Blandford, 2014), however, there is no formal statutory inclusion of leadership training as part of our Initial Teacher Training. It is therefore not surprising that there are lots of differences, inconsistencies and pathways for those aspiring to headship. At present the advice of serendipity seems to still carry some weight in that the opportunities for preparation or mentoring or having leadership potential spotted are entirely hit and miss. These are some of the reasons why I feel that we should now be looking at leadership in England through the identity lens as many of these inconsistencies and confusions could be clarified by tracking the leadership journey in terms of our internal and external pathways. Perhaps it is the time to bring *manaakitanga* (leading with moral purpose) and *pono* (having self belief) into an English understanding of successful school leadership (Notman, 2017, p768). If some core values were at the heart of the leadership identity journey it would give all applicants a chance to reflect on what has brought them to this point and give them confidence for the next steps.

5.2.1 Challenging views of leadership from a gender perspective

In order to maintain the central focus of this research study this is an area that I can indicate potential implications and it will need to be an area of potential future focus. As indicated above this is not a new concern, in fact it is one where some have argued there is less need for focus, whereas others suggest that the need remains and is as prevalent as before. This mixture of responses was certainly evident in the data gained from the interviews. Seeing this issue in terms of leadership identity and a changing view of leadership brings a new dimension to the question of the under representation of women in headship appointments.

Ibarra, Wittman, Petriglieri and Day suggest that this is still an issue that needs considering, arguing that the 'challenge for women is to construct leader identities in spite of the subtle barriers organizations erect to women's leadership advancement' (2014, p293). Given what has been suggested about inherent bias in terms of gender stereotyping according to leadership types, then one suggestion might be that in fact

that men and women need, at least in part, different forms of leadership preparation. As Ely, Ibarra and Kolb highlight, 'this approach assumes that gender either does not or should not matter for leadership development' (2011, p475). However, this still could be seen as a radical solution, especially as this is not the same as giving women additional support, it is suggesting that different genders might need, at least in part, programs that have been written with gender distinctions in mind. This chimes with movements in this country such as WomenEd (WomenEd, n.d.) although this is not the same, in that this organisation is a network of women seeking to specifically support women to encourage them to apply for leadership roles. What is interesting to note is that WomenEd has adopted a slogan for its followers of 'Be 10% Braver' (WomenEd, n.d.). This in itself presents something of the complexity of this issue. Many of the followers find comfort in this encouragement to go out and apply for jobs that perhaps they otherwise would not have considered, however, it also implies that women are not brave enough in the first instance. What this appears to do is to continue to perpetuate the association of certain traits and types of leadership with certain genders.

5.2 Perceptions of the recruitment process

The second research question asks whether applicants think that current recruitment processes allow them a fair opportunity to present their potential leadership identity. When comparing the recruitment process for headteachers today with studies of what happened 30 years ago (Morgan et al., 1983) we can see whilst some aspects of the selection have changed some of the actual practices, for example, the panel interview, have not really changed that much, except perhaps the extensive use of criteria by some, but not all. The structure is formed by the recruitment activities, which we have seen are still likely to include some form of written application although it is interesting to see that some schools are now moving away from this as a significant factor. This is an interesting contrast with some international alternatives where there could be an emphasis on a written essay (Browne-Ferrigno, 2002). There are now more likely to be a set of criteria that candidates will be judged against, this is likely to form the basis of the shortlisting process. The criteria will enable the shortlisting process particularly in

the absence of a recruitment company or consultant who may do this process themselves removed from the governing body, sometimes based upon a preliminary round of informal interviews with candidates. Once called into the school as part of the shortlist, the applicants are likely to take part in at least one panel interview and probably some opportunity to interact with pupils. This could take the form of chairing a school council meeting, or perhaps teaching a lesson. Another activity could be an opportunity for interaction with the staff. In addition to this there may be some additional activities, these could include in-tray exercises, perhaps some psychometric testing or a financial exercise. There may be some additional features, for example, the ordeal by meal or a tour around the school, but these activities are likely to be in addition to the core of the selection process. In the case of all the examples I encountered through this research, these processes usually took place in the school itself. Alternatively, it is worth remembering that some organisations and individual schools might choose to use assessment centres instead, although this was not the case with the data gathered during this small-scale study. Whether at a centre or at the school, many of the activities may follow a similar format.

Given that this is the case, the question is raised as to whether applicants feel this is a successful way of identifying potential leadership identity or is it more likely to result in the appointment of a particular type of candidate that is able to navigate this process effectively, independently of their potential ability as a future headteacher. Applicants certainly had a range of views on some of these activities, which sometimes corresponded to how good they felt they were at them. Data gathered from the online questionnaire and the follow-up interviews seem to suggest that it was a great help if you were good at the process. This was seen as something quite distinct to the applicants' reflections on their own leadership identity. At present I believe that discussions on headships, aspiring to leadership and selection struggle to establish anything about the internal journey of leadership without the language of identity and that the diversity presented in the data supports this. Suitability for selection is seen in terms of experience of leadership and to enhance this further the direction has been taken to identify leadership as occurring much earlier in most teachers' careers. To connect back to Ibarra's views on leadership (2016), this implies that the applicants will

talk about when they have acted as a leader, but does that automatically mean that they think like a leader? Again, the most recent focus on Teacher Leadership provides aspiring heads with the opportunity to talk in terms of experience, but I think this means that there is a missed opportunity to recognise the importance of reflection as part of the teaching career and to consider the leadership identity self. At the moment reflection on self appears to be an optional extra. Given the different research that focuses on the development of leadership identity (Ibarra et al., 2014, Lord and Hall, 2005) it seems that there are missed opportunities for applicants that could help them identify their potential leadership ability. Why would this approach be any better than existing processes? It is worth noting Burke and Stets here when they say, 'The energy, motivation, drive that makes roles actually work require that individuals identify with, internalise and become the role' (2009, p38). Without this different approach then the selection process has to take a cross-referencing approach through a multitude of activities, primarily based upon experience or the application of experience, against a set of criteria, to give the process the appearance of fairness and transparency. Of course, as we have already seen, this is a pseudo-mathematical process implying the recruitment process can be carried out as scientifically as possible. The use of criteria produces data that can be added up in order to appear to suggest the best-fit applicant, which appears to be independent of the subjective opinions of the recruiters. Except that given that the values attributed to the various criteria, the scores then allocated and their inclusion as part of the selection at all, is of course entirely subjective.

5.3 Presenting Leadership Identity

This is an exciting area of potential further development. As Ibarra, Wittman, Petriglieri and Day conclude in their article on 'Leadership and Identity' in the Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organisations, 'the field of leader identity is ripe for further research' (2014, p297). With regards to the particular focus on the appointment of headteachers for this research it is even more encouraging to read 'in leader emergence, there is much room to expand our current knowledge of how non-prototypical leaders emerge, develop and are effective, even when theory proposes lack of support by prospective

followers' (2014, p297). For me this goes beyond the criterion of experience that has been and continues to be dominant in the appointment of headteachers. Lord and Hall (2005) say that the shifting of identity focus takes place when certain leadership skills are developed. This certainly accounts for the surprising responses to the question in the online survey, which asked the applicants about how they saw themselves in terms of the potential headship leadership identity. Lord and Hall (2005) explore how this shift takes place and this sense of identity moves from 'being a peripheral, provisional aspect of the self, indicative of one's leadership potential, to being a more central and enduring one, grounded in actual achievement' (Ibarra et al., 2014, p289). This implies that for someone to apply for headship there needs to be this underpinning sense of leadership identity 'grounded in actual achievement' (Ibarra et al., 2014, p289). I believe this is not necessarily the same as having experience; the action is not necessarily the same thing as the thought. If anything it appears to confirm the need for both an internal and external identity shift. Speaking at the Oxford Business Centre, Ibarra said 'Act then think', changing what you do will lead to you changing the way you think (2017). Conversely 'failing to receive validation for one's leadership attempts' (Ibarra et al., 2014, p289) can have the reverse effect, which would suggest the importance of someone externally mentoring or at least encouraging this leadership process in the applicant's school.

As someone who has regularly asked questions about why mentoring is not more formalized in education I am interested that the response is often that there is a great deal of mentoring available for new heads. Gibson also mentions the importance of mentoring of new principals when leadership succession has been in place in MATs (2018). I still believe that whilst of course there is merit for this process to take place, it would make more sense to introduce an option for formalized mentoring much earlier in the process. At the very least this would be likely to make the possibility of applying for the post far more attractive. As it stands mentoring is most likely to exist in schools in the process of inducting newly qualified teachers (NQTs). In the case of MATs this might also be present if succession management has been put in place (see 2.1.1). There is an understanding that NQTs will have mentors and yet there is very little identification that this a different role to being a teacher, requiring different skills and

training of mentors, if existing at all, tends to be informal (Aspfors and Fransson, 2014). This also points to the importance of feedback and how this could be used to reinforce or strengthen potential leaders. Imagine if a process of nominating someone for a headship role, such as the one outlined by Browne-Ferrigno (2002), was formalized in England, what a difference it would make to the status of mentoring within schools. Of course the introduction of mentoring in a more formalized sense would not be without its problems, for example, the success of the relationship is often built upon trust and honesty and this might make it difficult for an aspiring applicant to be honest about their experiences in school (Gibson, 2018).

I began by setting out what I feel is important in terms of values as part of leadership and it is important to come back to this point in the light of the findings. The link between authentic (potential) leadership and identity seems to be significant. Ibarra, Wittman, Petriglieri and Day suggest that 'leaders are most authentic and effective when they internalize, not just enact the identities that followers hold dear' (2014, pp290-291). Ibarra suggests that an authentic leader is one who is true to self, constant and transparent and true to their values (2017). What does this mean for any formal preparation for headship, that it is likely to be more successful if it 'result(s) in a "deep identification" with a dissolution of the boundary between one's role requirements and personal identity' (Ibarra et al., 2014, p291). Day and Harrison (2007) agree on the need for a connection to be made between leadership identity and self, 'coming to appreciate that one's self concept is at least partly the self-as-leader is critically important to the development of individual leaders' (2007, p365). If this identification of self is not part of a formal preparation for headship it would be likely to make even the process of applying for headship far more challenging. Looking at existing formal preparation programmes this appears to be a very different approach to the existing focus on standards and accountability. Even looking at informal pathways from my data it seems that this is still somewhat erratic and by chance. Some individuals take themselves off to prepare for headship by attending courses of different formats, however, especially with the non-statutory need for an NPQH this appears to even less evident now. What is apparent is that looking at formal or informal preparation there is still no common ground in terms of language. This is

what the language of identity theory could provide, as an underpinning structure for self-reflection as part of the leadership journey. In its place at present is a reference to on-going leadership as in teacher leadership and yet it is worth recalling Wenner and Campell (2017) citing Neumerski (2012) when he says, 'there is little consensus around what constitutes 'teacher leadership' . . . it tends to be an umbrella term referring to a myriad of work' (2016, p135). Therefore my original notion of leadership as a layering of perceptions rings true, that there is potentially even less opportunity for coherence than possibly anticipated.

What would be better than these existing practices? When considering what effective headship preparation could look like, it seems worth remembering what Day and Harrison suggest that 'effective leader development is the differentiation and integration of leadership and personal experiences, values, and sense of self' (2007, p366). If we were to ask the question as to whether this is true reflection of current leadership development within education, either formally or informally, the responses are likely to be mixed. This is certainly the case with the responses from the interviews. Only two of the interviewees talked at all about the importance of the leadership preparation for headship as a time when values and vision could be reflected on. Ultimately what this suggests to me is that what is missing from much of the discussion surrounding leadership preparation for headship is the language of leadership identity; what is the understanding of self. Responses to questions on how to explore your leadership identity through the interview process almost always reverted to discussions of experience even when I used identity terminology in the questioning. To be able to talk about both aspects distinctly and the relationship between the two would, I believe, enhance the recruitment of headteachers.

5.4 What could we do better in developing a sense of leadership identity?

Fidler and Atton suggest that one way that more teachers could be encouraged to apply for headship would be to provide 'better preparation for headship' (2004, p228). Earley, Weindling, Bubb, and Glenn (2009) support this emphasis on better headship preparation, saying that it is a key factor in securing the future of headship. Perhaps it

is somewhat ironic that Education should look to Business, that itself has taken from Philosophy, the importance of taking into account the whole self when preparing the next generation of leaders (Petriglieri et al., 2011). Writers from within business are looking to 'the language of educational scholars' when considering the best approach for leadership development courses, suggesting that they should 'be less concerned with informational learning…and more with transformational learning' (Petriglieri et al., 2011, p432). What this means in practise is to switch the focus to 'reflection on one's life experiences, core beliefs, and ways of making sense of the world and oneself, thus affecting "a deep and pervasive shift in a [person's] perspective and understanding' (2011, p432). This is in agreement with Miscenko, Guenter and Day who argue that 'skills-based approaches alone cannot capture the complex nature of leader development' (2017, p2).

The challenge for those involved in training teachers is that the climate is applying pressure to equip potential leaders for the difficulties they will face in terms of standards, finances, compliance and accountability. Whilst there is no denial that these are important aspects of modern educational leadership, the suggestion is that to face them is made far easier by ensuring that the values foundations are in place. It is interesting to note that one of the interviewees talked about their own experience of being in a Teach First school. Teach First has as one of its aims to promote more leadership training, however, Blandford (2014) notes that the way this could develop in this country is still behind experience in other countries. Blandford writes that our experience in England 'contrasts with 'top-performing' Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and economies, where school leadership is a central aspect of Initial Teacher Training. In Singapore, school leadership training and Initial Teacher Training involves leadership training that is based on that found in large corporations. Similarly, in both Hong Kong and Shanghai, accountability, including school leadership, is a key aspect of Initial Teacher Training programmes' (2014, p3).

Miscenko, Guenter and Day suggest that there needs to be a change of perspective on how leadership development takes place saying, 'we propose that a leader development program presents a new set of identity meanings' (2017, p2). They suggest that the reasoning for this is that it 'motivates participants to re-construct their

currently held meaning of leader identity, and this will manifest in changing strength of leader identity' (2017, p3). My suggestion is in line with this, in that I think that those foundations are about establishing an authentic leadership and part of that authenticity is about revisiting leadership through the identity lens. This is not necessarily an easy process and individuals may have to go through many different versions of themselves, as they experience different examples of leadership, but the process allows the testing of the leadership self. As Day and Harrison conclude some ten years ago, 'Given that the exercise of leadership is a complex human endeavor, incorporating an identity lens into leader and leadership development efforts is probably long overdue' (2007, p371).

6. Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Study

At the very beginning of this process was the idea that perhaps some teachers were more likely to be appointed than others. In the early stages of the thinking process there was a shift from a narrow focus on what could be seen as a trait leadership topic to the implications of bringing together of Leadership Identity theory with recruitment processes, equality issues, formal leadership preparation and a review of English Headship. The result is a small-scale research study based upon a model of the recruitment and selection process. Working from an interpretivist research position, I have investigated applicants' perceptions of the recruitment of English secondary school headteachers. Primarily it is a study of people, the people who are applying, their perceptions of being a headteacher, their perceptions of the process of applying for this role and their perceptions of self during this process. As a result I believe I have remained true to my own research position. The final discussions raise issues relating to ways in which Leadership Identity theory could be further integrated into education, how English headteachers are recruited and then selected for a successful appointment, what this means for our understanding of headship and what could be done to improve the quality of leadership preparation, as a result of these ideas.

6.2 Original Contribution to Knowledge

I believe that an article in The Times Newspaper highlighted the relevance of my research, where the opening words of the article state that, 'Britain is facing a crisis in recruiting headteachers, with thousands complaining of high pressure and insufficient pay as they quit and retire early' (Woolcock, 2016). Throughout the article different councils share their experiences regarding the problematic process of recruiting, for example a spokesman for the council in Dudley said, 'We have a poor response for headship recruitments and most schools have to re-advertise' and a spokeswoman for Tower Hamlets said, 'Recent head appointments have had few applicants who have the suitable skills and experience to be shortlisted for positions' (2016, p6f). There are of

course many reasons as to why headteachers are leaving posts early, but this research is focused on the other end of the process. How headteachers are recruited today so that they can replace those that are exiting and retiring; has the recruitment process matched the changes and developments in leadership theory? At the centre of the process are those applying for headship. How can those applying, especially those first-time applicants, feel confident that their potential leadership identity can be recognized through this selection process, especially when they are up against those with existing experience as a Head? Will all of these aspects continue to struggle, until we return to our definitions of headship and leadership to take account, not only of the changing educational climate, but also of the essential foundations that will ground future leaders to face a range of challenges?

I believe that the theoretical model that I have developed to examine the recruitment and selection process offers a new perspective on what is happening at each stage of the process. I believe that my original contribution brings together a number of new and exciting areas of study and to apply these to the challenging context of headship appointment. There may be some existing correlation between the shift in focus of headship preparation to the development of skills, for example financial acumen, and the kind of questions that are asked at interview. However, I am suggesting that this shift in focus is moving in the wrong direction, which means that potential leaders have not necessarily gone through the self-examination of leadership identity that I am suggesting here could form the basis even of formal preparation courses.

I think the critical evaluation of existing practice will prompt a number of questions for the following areas. Firstly, the form that the recruitment and selection process takes, including the way in which the Head's role is presented to applicants. At present this is hugely undervalued as part of the recruitment and selection process. Rather than be dismissive or too quick to dispatch this information it is worth reflection, as language matters and conveys meaning. Secondly, the role of mentoring in education and what this could mean for encouraging headship applicants, particularly with reflection upon the development of the leadership identity for those considering headship. Finally, the research raises questions regarding the importance of Teacher Training and Leadership

Development, in general. For example, I suggest that there should there be changes made to the initial training of teachers. At the point of writing there is no direct mention of leadership or what it is to be a leader as part of the Teacher Standards (Gov.uk, 2017). Depending upon who is carrying out the initial teacher training there may be some mention of possible department leadership, but I would suggest that teachers should be made aware of the leadership structure within education and have some initial opportunities to reflect on this. Without integration into training, most teachers' leadership knowledge is dependent upon the school investing in INSET for their staff, or teachers seeking out training for themselves.

At this stage I believe that my research findings will provide a critical evaluation of existing practices and this allows me to offer some suggestions that with research and development could be useful for developing headship preparation further. At the very least I believe that using the conceptual model allows for a greater understanding of the process for those applying and helps aspiring heads to reflect upon their own leadership identity. Certainly it would be entirely possible to prepare some training materials based upon leadership identity theory to aid those considering the move to headship.

6.3 Reflective overview and limitations

The work on this thesis has been a huge journey from where I started to writing up the final thesis. I started with a common experience found within education, that of applying for headship, but a process that is still surrounded by a great deal of mystery and speculation. This is even more puzzling given the significance of headship recruitment on a school's direction and performance. In response, I constructed my own conceptual framework, which has been adapted and modified in light of my research findings. I think the concept of identity and in particular, the internal leadership identity shift is something that definitely warrants further explorations in the context of the recruitment of headteachers. At a time when the definitions of the role are being rewritten, but are also being challenged, there is a fine balance between

the post being attractive to aspiring heads and still conveying the 'standards of excellence' (DfE, 2015) intended.

I feel happier with the conceptual framework underpinning my focus of study; looking at the interception of the identity of the applicant, perceptions of headship against the context of the recruitment and selection process itself. I feel that the results of the online questionnaire and the analysis of headship recruitment packs have generated useful raw data that I have been able to analyse and incorporate into the latter stages of the research process. As a first response to my first research question, the study has begun to show that the focus of the recruitment pack, even the person specifications appear to have become less focused on the incoming potential leader. It is of course worth remembering this is only a sample of 30 secondary school headship packs, but there are similarities and differences that can be identified, for example the language of accountability in the Job Descriptions: 'ensure', 'development', 'effective'. It is clear to see the lines of responsibility when 'academy' is mentioned 107 times, governors, 80 times, but both 'delegate' and 'autonomous' get two mentions each. I was pleased with the raw data that the online survey produced and felt it worked well in conjunction with the textual analysis. Initially I considered that applicants appear to see job and person specifications as important, but the evidence from the interviews questioned this was the case, where they were often regarded as uninformative and generic. Normally time goes into the construction of them and yet do all agree on the portrait of headship they offer? What was apparent was that the description of the headship role portrayed has changed dramatically in the last ten years.

Again, I think there is always more work that could be done in analysing the responses, for example, carrying out future research with willing headship applicants on their experiences and perspectives. The first findings from the online questionnaire were that aspiring candidates perceive the process as being fair, but already there are some conditions to that, which provides a bridge to later aspects of the study. Certainly there is more work to do on the recruitment and selection processes with data from the questionnaire, the textual analysis and the interviews, particularly on consistency, fairness and intentions. The survey data suggests that as a group they are consciously

aware of the identity shift that they are going through with responses reminiscent of Browne-Ferrigno (2003), but how is this actively sought and identified as part of the selection process, or is a personal educational vision less important than a global or even corporate one. If the awareness is already there then that suggests to me that there is even more potential for further work on the integration of Leadership Identity theory into the leadership training within education.

Silverman suggests that the reliance upon a mixed methods approach could be a substitute for acknowledging that the scope of the study is too broad (2014, p 47). This is an understandable position to hold and the question of scope has certainly been raised at various points through the research process. However, particularly if the constructivist perspective is kept in mind, the goal is not about establishing a complete picture, instead it is to look at a range of different perspectives and to examine the areas of coherence within that. By incorporating these three elements, different perceptions are brought together and by exploring the areas of overlap and distinction, each benefits from what the others bring.

Naturally there are limitations to the research. The research itself is small-scale and therefore the range of data makes it difficult to draw broad conclusions about the recruitment process as a whole. A larger project would allow for further interviews and more in-depth investigation. My own experience of this process could have been a limitation, for example with the interviewing process. I went into this aspect of the research fairly confident that this would be an effective method of research that I could grapple with. However, I would say that it was harder than anticipated; I was not as good initially as I had anticipated, although I did get better with practice, for example asking my questions more succinctly. It helped that I followed Silverman's advice and did not 'ask [my] research questions directly' (2013, p206). It was tempting at times to ask leading questions, but found by following the interview schedule I gained honest answers rather than expected answers. Actually using Skype meant I could quickly reference my interview schedule without taking away from the (virtual) face-to-face experience. My experience of Skype has on the whole been positive in this research process and using this method has enabled me to talk with people quickly, who I

otherwise might not have been able to schedule a meeting, as they are often busy people themselves.

6.4 Implications for Professional Practice and Recommendations for the Future

As previously referenced, Gunter has considered the place of values in educational organisations and raises this as being 'core to these debates…the issue of decision-making, and how administrative procedures as a science fail to connect with *philosophical* considerations regarding values' (2016, p50). This juxtaposition of the perception of the applicant with the role of headteacher in the recruitment and selection process is potentially where the pathways might fail to connect. What I hope is that, with this insight into the applicants' perceptions, some suggestions can be made to improve the usefulness of a process that has largely remained the same for some decades. For example, examining leadership identity much earlier in the process would make a difference, or utilizing Browne-Ferrigno's work describing the move 'to 'nominations' from local leaders 'based upon leadership potential' (2002, p11), or incorporating a 'visit to you in your current school' as suggested by one respondent to the online survey (see Appendix D). To adapt this process further still the nomination for the post could be based upon a mentoring the applicant's journey, regarding their own leadership identity, that could then be discussed as part of the appointment process.

I asked Sir Anthony Seldon whether it would be possible to interview him in relation to my research. This was not possible, but he was prepared to answer a few questions. The first question I put to him was whether he felt the current practices associated with the recruitment of headteachers effectively recognise leadership potential (in comparison with, for example, experience)? His response was 'No, but I am not clear how you measure "potential" of heads. Ambition, determination and track record are clearly key but much of it is down to the particular job that needs to be done, and one type of leader in one situation doesn't suit another' (Carter, 2016). The second question asked in what ways, if any, did he feel that the current training and recruitment of Heads recognises an understanding of leadership identity, that is an

intrinsic understanding of one's self as a leader? Seldon's response to this was 'The best work in this area is by Simon Walker, author of "The Undefended Leader" (2010). I would put mindfulness and self-reflection at the heart of any programme for leadership. This does not happen at the moment' (Carter, 2016) and the final question put was, in his opinion, what are the features of a fair and effective recruitment process for headteachers? Seldon responded by saying 'This is a difficult area because references are so unreliable. I think track record is key. What has somebody actually done to show that they have the grit, strength and intelligence to be an effective and compassionate leader?' (Carter, 2016). In some ways there is quite a traditional focus here on the role that experience and reputation can play in establishing suitability for the role. However, there is also a call to 'self-reflection' that ties in with some of the discussion in this study.

Following my response from Sir Anthony Seldon to my questions on the nature of school leadership today, it was interesting to see that Seldon, along with Toby Young and Sir Michael Wilshaw then proposed 'a new school leadership college' (TES, 22 April 2016). In this Seldon was quoted to have said that 'too many heads' were appointed without 'any clear idea of why they are there or what they have to offer'. He added that 'Nothing matters more than the quality of leadership – nothing' and that 'We can prepare them better so they are more compassionate, wise, accomplished, rounded leaders rather than mean, sausage-factory, league-table-obsessed people' (TES, 2016).

I agree that the quality of leadership is incredibly important and yet discussions relating to this are often sidetracked into development of skills deemed to be essential. There are two concerns with what has been put forward in terms of this identification of potential leadership. Firstly the responses that this received from teachers. The ideas put forward by Seldon, Young and Wilshaw (TES, 22 April 2016) prompted a mixed response from teachers including skepticism of fast-tracking leadership and questions of how this related to appointment of Heads within Trusts.

This leads to the second concern that the nature of headship is changing through the ways in which appointments could be made within MATs. This perhaps links with some

of the findings and tallies with Blackmore, Thomson and Barty (2006) when they raised the issue in their context of 'principal selection is undergoing a kind of mutation as it becomes increasingly entangled with succession planning at various levels of administration' (2006, p299). In an increasing number of situations the appointment of headteachers is changing to be far more dominated by the preference for succession planning in order to ensure that the ethos of the establishment is fully understood. The prevalence of this could drastically change the educational leadership in England secondary education and could again bypass important training and preparation that goes beyond local concerns. Whilst it could be seen as good that potential leadership is being spotted early and nurtured it is not without its concerns as an alternative process (see 2.1.1)

The final concern raised by the teacher's response to this news is that there will be resistance to the idea of discovering the leadership identity lens. This has already been seen in some of the research related to the interview process where Blackmore, Thomson and Barty noted that sometimes there appeared to be evidence of 'strong anti-intellectualism' with some interviewing panels, for example where one candidate that had studied at post-graduate level this 'quickly alienated a number of panel members with his sophisticated use of language' (2006, p307). Despite much good work by organisations, such as BELMAS (British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society) and BERA (British Education Research Association), to bridge the gap between academic research into education and practitioner experience, suspicion can remain about tackling and integrating new conceptual theories. Despite this, I believe looking at headship through an identity lens could add a great deal of clarity to this exciting topic. Given all of these points, I believe the debate in all of these areas shows that my research is extremely relevant to the on-going evaluation of headship today and should make a new contribution to the debate.

References

Arthur, J, Waring, M, Coe, R J and Hodges, L V, (2012), *Research Methods and Methodologies in Education*, London, SAGE

Aspfors, J and Fransson, G (2014), 'Research on mentor education for mentors of newly qualified teachers: A qualitative meta-synthesis', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol.48, pp75-85

Ball, S (2012), *The Micro-Politics of the School: Towards a Theory of School Organization*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd.

BBC News - Top heads to be parachuted into schools http://bbc.in/1eEXPay (Accessed January 20 2015)

BBC News – Head Teacher recruitment 'increasingly difficult' warning http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-27946799 (Accessed April 2017)

Becker, H S (1982), 'Culture: A Sociological Point of View', *Yale Review*, vol.71, pp513-27

BERA, Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2011), London, BERA

Berkeley, G (1988), *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous,* London, Penguin

Bisschoff, T and Mackenzie-Batterbury, R (2013), 'The Journey to Academy Principalship' in *International Studies in Educational Administration*, vol.40 (3), pp.33-43

Blackmore, J, Thomson, P and Barty, K (2006), 'Principal Selection: Homosociability, the Search for Security and the Production of Normalized Principal Identities' in *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, vol.34 (3), pp.297-317

Blandford, S (2014) 'Leading through partnership: enhancing the Teach First Leadership Programme', *Teacher Development*, vol.18 (1), pp1-14

Blustein, D, Noumair, D (1996), 'Self and Identity in Career Development: Implication for Theory and Practice', in *Journal of Counseling and Development*, vol.74, pp433-441

Bourdieu, P (1977) *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Bourdieu, P (1990) *The Logic of Practice*, Cambridge, Polity Press

Bourdieu, P (1998) *Practical Reason: On the Theory of Action*, Cambridge, Polity Press

Bourdieu, P & Wacquant, L, J D (1992) *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, University Chicago Press

Browne-Ferrigno, T (2002), ''An Exploratory Analysis of Leadership Preparation Selection Criteria' – a report presented at the Annual Meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration, Pittsburgh, PA

Browne-Ferrigno, T (2003), 'Becoming a Principal: Role Conception, Initial Socialization, Role-Identity Transformation, Purposeful Engagement', *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol.39 (4), pp468-503

Brundrett, M and Rhodes, C (2014), *Researching Educational Leadership and Management*, London, SAGE

Bryman, A (2016), *Social Research Methods*, Oxford, Oxford University Press

Buckler, S and Walliman, N (2016), *Your Dissertation in Education,* London, SAGE

Burke, P J and Stets, J E, (2009), *Identity Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press

Burkeman, O (2013) 'This Column with Change your Life: do you feel a fraud?', 9 November [Online], Available at https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/nov/09/impostor-syndrome-oliver-burkeman (Accessed March 2017)

Bush, T (2013), 'Preparing Headteachers in England: Professional Certification, not Academic Learning' in *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, vol.41 (4), pp.453-465

Bush, T (2016), 'Preparation for school principals: Rationale and practice', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol.44 (4) pp537–539

Carter, C (2016), Email to B.K Kelly from C Carter, PA to Anthony Seldon, 13 February 2016

Christie, J, Robertson, B and Stodter, J, (2016), *ADES Report on Headship Recruitment*, Edinburgh, Scottish Government

Cohen, L, Manion, L and Morrison, K, (2011), *Research Methods in Education*, London, SAGE

Coleman, M (2007), 'Gender and educational leadership in England: a comparison of secondary headteachers' views over time' in *School Leadership & Management,* vol.27 (4), pp383-399

Cowie, M and Crawford, M (2009) 'Headteacher preparation programmes in England and Scotland: do they make a difference for the first-year head?', *School Leadership and Management*, vol.29, (1), pp5-21

Crow, G M and Glasock, C. (1995), 'Socialization to a new conception of the Principalship' *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol.*33* (1), pp22-43

Crow, G M and Møller, J (2017), 'Professional identities of school leaders across international contexts: An introduction and rationale', *Educational Management, Administration and Leadership*, vol.45 (5), pp749-758

Crow, G M and Scribner S P (2014), 'Professional identities of urban school principals.' in Milner H R and Lomotey, K (eds.) *Handbook of Urban Education*, New York, Routledge, pp287-304

Day, D V and Harrison, M M (2007), 'A multilevel, identity-based approach to leadership develop', *Human Resource Management Review*, vol.17 (4), pp360-373

Day, D V, Harrison, M M and Halpin, S M (2009), *An integrative approach to leader development: Connecting adult development, identity, and expertise,* New York, Taylor and Francis

De Montfort University, online informed consent sample form http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CCEQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.dmu.ac.uk%2Fresearch%2Fethics-and-governance%2Fpg-and-research%2Fhuman-research-ethics%2Ftechnology%2Fsample-consent-documents.aspx&ei=9MXpVMmaDcy57gbHsICQBg&usg=AFQjCNGlOqaO4eCSc80ubu-n2dgiOpZJlA&bvm=bv.86475890,d.ZGU (Accessed 15 February 2015)

Deakin, H and Wakefield, K (2014), 'Skype interviewing: reflections of two PhD researchers' in *Qualitative Research*, vol.14 (5), pp.603-616

Dean, E, Head, B and Swicegood, J (2014) 'Virtual Cognitive Interviewing Using Skype and Second Life' in Hill, C A, Dean, E and Murphy, J, *Social Media, Sociality, and Survey Research*, New Jersey, Wiley and Sons

Department for Education DfE, (2014), 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' https://www.gov.uk%2Fgovernment%2Fpublications%2Fkeeping-children-safe-in-education&ei=wGOhVPWcCZKp7AbyxYCoDw&usg=AFQjCNFp6W-kY9C0Ch8Lsepkh7trQEKTgw&bvm=bv.82001339,d.ZGU (accessed 29 December 2014)

Department for Education (DfE), (2014 update 2015) Study Modules for school leaders Aspiring to Headship https://www.gov.uk/study-modules-for-school-leaders-aspiring-to-headship (Accessed 15 February 2015)

Department for Education (DfE) (2015), *National Standards for excellence for Headteachers*, London, DfE

Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) (2000), *National Standards for Headteachers*, London, DfEE

Earley, P (2013), *Exploring the School Leadership Landscape*, London, Bloomsbury

Earley, P, Weindling, D, Bubb, S and Glenn, M (2009), 'Future Leaders: the way forward?', in *School Leadership and Management*, vol.29 (3), pp.295-306

Ely, R J, Ibarra, H and Kolb, D M, (2011), 'Taking Gender Into Account: Theory and Design for Women's Leadership Development Programs', *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, Vol. 10, (3), pp.474–493

English, F W (2006), 'The Unintended Consequences of a Standardized Knowledge Base in Advancing Educational Leadership Preparation', *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol. 42 (3), pp. 461-472

English, F W & Bolton, C L (2016), *Bourdieu for Educators*, SAGE, London

Erikson, E H (1968), *Identity – Youth and crisis*, New York, Norton

Fidler, B (1992), 'How to get the top job', *Times Educational Supplement*, 21 February 1992, 17

Fidler, B and Atton, T (2004), *The Headship Game*, London, Routledge Farmer

Fink, D (2010), *The Succession Challenge: Building and Sustaining Leadership Capacity through Succession Management*, London, SAGE

Flyvbjerg, B (2004), 'Five misunderstandings about case-study research', in Seale, C, Gobo, G, Gubrium and Silverman, D (eds.), *Qualitative Research Practice*, Thousand Oaks, SAGE

Foucault, M (1981), 'Questions of method: an interview with Michael Foucault', *Ideology and Consciousness,* vol.8, (Spring), pp3-14

Fullan, M (2004), *Leading in a Culture of Change,* San Francisco, Jossey Bass

Foster, R (1996), 'Selecting Primary School Headteachers: potential bias in Barsetshire', *School Organisation*, vol.16 (1), pp.101-110

Gecas, V (1982), 'The self-concept', *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol.8, pp1-33

Genius (2014), Unlocking the full potential of women in the US Economy, https://genius.com/Joanna-barsh-unlocking-the-full-potential-of-women-in-the-us-economy-annotated (Accessed March 2017)

Gibbs, G (2007), *Analysing Qualitative Data,* London, SAGE

Gibson, M T (2018), 'Leadership preparation and development within a multi-academy trust: Self-improving or self-serving?, Management in Education, vol.32 (2), pp92–97

Glover, D and Bush, T (2005), 'The online or e-survey: a research approach for the ICT age', *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, vol. 28 (2), pp135-46

Gov.uk (2010), Equality Act, https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents (Accessed February 2015)

Gov.uk (2015), Press Release for National standards of excellence for headteachers, https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-headteacher-standards-and-review-of-itt-published (Accessed February 2015)

Gov.uk, (2015) https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-headteacher-standards-and-review-of-itt-published (Accessed January 15 2015)

Gov.uk, (2017) Teacher Standards, https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/teachers-standards (Accessed March 2017)

Gronn, P (1999), *The Making of Educational Leaders*, London, Cassell

Gronn, P, (2003), *The New Work of Educational Leaders*, London, SAGE

Gronn, P and Lacey, K (2004), 'Positioning oneself for leadership: feelings of vulnerability among aspirant school principals', *School Leadership and Management*, vol.24 (4), pp.405-424

Gronn, P and Lacey, K (2006), 'Cloning their own: Aspirant principals and the school-based selection game', *Australian Journal of Education*, vol. 50 (2), pp102–121

Grummell, B, Devine, D and Lynch, K (2009) 'Appointing Senior Managers in Education Homosociability, Local Logics and Authenticity in the Selection Process', *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol.37 (3), pp329-349

Guillén, Mayo M and Korotov, K (2015) 'Is leadership a part of me? A leader identity approach to understanding the motivation to lead', *The Leadership Quarterly,* vol26 (5), pp802-820

Gunter, H (1999) 'Contracting Headteachers as Leaders: an analysis of the NPQH', *Cambridge Journal of Education,* vol.29 (2), pp251-264

Gunter, H (2001), *Leaders and Leadership in Education*, London, SAGE

Gunter, H (2016), *An Intellectual History of School Leadership Practice and Research*, London, Bloomsbury

Gunter, H and Thomson, P (2009), 'The makeover: a new logic in leadership development in England', in *Educational Review*, vol.61 (4), pp.469-483

Harvard Business Review (2014), Why Women don't apply for jobs unless they are 100% qualified, https://hbr.org/2014/08/why-women-dont-apply-for-jobs-unless-theyre-100-qualified (Accessed March 2017)

Haslam, S A, Reicher, S D and Platow, M J (2011), *The New Psychology of Leadership*, New York, Psychology Press

Heilman, M E, Wallen, A S, Fuchs, D and Tamkins, M M (2004), 'Penalties for success: Reactions to women who succeed at male gender-typed tasks', *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol.89 (3), pp416–427

Herriot, P (2002), 'Selection and Self: Selection as a Social Process', *European Journal Of Work And Organizational Psychology*, vol.11 (4), pp385–402

HM Government, School Staffing Regulations (England) 2003 Statutory

Hoffman, B J, Woehr, D J, Maldagen-Youngjohn, R, Lyons, B D, (2011), 'Great man or great myth? A quantitative review of the relationship between individual differences and leader effectiveness', *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology,* vol.84, pp347–381

Horner, C and Westacott, E, (2000), *Thinking Through Philosophy,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Humphrey, R H (2014), *Effective Leadership,* Los Angeles, SAGE

Hunter, J and Hunter, R (1984) 'Validity and utility of alternative predictors of job performance' in *Psychological Bulletin*, vol.96, pp72-98

Ibarra, H (1999), 'Provisional Selves: Experimenting with image and identity in professional adaptation', in *Administrative Science Quarterly*, vol. 44(4), pp764-791

Ibarra, H (2003), *Working Identity*, Boston, Harvard Press

Ibarra, H (2016), *Act Like a Leader, Think Like a Leader*, Boston, Harvard Business Review Press

Ibarra, H (2017), *Leadership & Identity* [Clarendon Lectures in Management Studies, Oxford Business School] 11 October

Ibarra, Wittman, Petriglieri and Day, 'Leadership and Identity: An Examination of Three Theories and New Research Direction' in Day, D V (ed.) (2014), *The Oxford Handbook of Leadership and Organizations*, Oxford, Oxford University Press

Independent Newspaper 'Heads being dumped like football managers, says union' http://ind.pn/1LyhQB1 (Accessed February 18 2015)

Jones, D (2008), 'The construction of identities: Male primary headteachers' perceptions and experiences of their role', in *Early Child Development and Care,* vol. 178, (7&8), pp689–702

Kelly, B (2015) Final Report Year 1, EdD

Kirkham, G (2000), 'Values and equity in headteacher recruitment and selection', in *Management in Education*, vol.14, pp.19-21

Krathwohl, D R (1998), *Methods of Educational and Social Science Research* (2nd Ed), New York, Longman

Kwan, P (2011), 'Assessing school principal candidates: perspectives of the hiring superintendents', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, vol.15 (3), p331-349

Kwan, P and Walker, A (2009), 'Are we looking through the same lens? Principal recruitment and selection', in *International Journal of Educational Research* vol.48 pp. 51–61

Lasky, S (2005), 'A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform' in *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol.21 (8), pp899-916

Leithwood, K, Jantzi, D and Steinbach, R (1999), *Changing Leadership for Changing Times*, Buckingham, Oxford University Press

Leithwood, K and Jantzi, D (2008), 'Linking Leadership to Student Learning: The Contributions of Leader Efficacy', *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol.44, pp496-528

Leithwood, K, Harris, A and Hopkins, D (2008), 'Seven strong claims about successful school leadership' in *School Leadership & Management*, vol.28 (1), pp.27-42

Lord, R G and Hall, R J (2005) 'Identity, deep structure and the development of leadership skill', *The Leadership Quarterly,* vol.16, pp591-615

Lumby, J and English, F (2009), 'From simplicism to complexity in leadership identity and preparation*: exploring the lineage and dark secrets', International Journal of Leadership in Education,* vol.12 (2), pp95–114

MacBeath, B, Oduro, G, Jacka, J and Hobby, R (2006), *Leading Appointments*, Nottingham, National College of Leadership

Mazmanian, M, Orlikowski, W J and Yates, J (2013), 'The Autonomy Paradox: The Implications of Mobile Email Devices for Knowledge Professional', *Organisational Science,* vol.24, pp1337-1357

McCall, G and Simmons, J L (1978) *Identities and interactions,* New York, Free Press

Mead, G H, (1934), *Mind, Self and Society*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press

Middlewood, D and Lumby, J (1998), *Human Resources Management in Schools and Colleges*, London, Chapman Business

Milton, E, Davies, A J, Morgan, A, Connolly, M and Donnelly, D (2018) 'Recruiting headteachers in Wales for a new era of professional collegiality' paper presented at BELMAS annual conference, Windsor, UK, 6-8 July

Miscenko, D, Guenter, H and Day, D (2017), 'Am I a leader? Examining leader identity development over time', *The Leadership Quarterly*, January

Morgan, C, Hall, V and Mackay, H (1983), *The Selection of Secondary School Headteachers*, Milton Keynes, Open University

NASUWT (2014), Press Releases, http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/Whatsnew/NASUWTNews/PressReleases/NASUWT_013438 (accessed on 6 April 2015)

NCSL, (2006), *Recruiting headteachers and senior leaders: Seven steps to success*, Nottingham, National College of School Leadership

Neumerski, C M (2012), 'Rethinking instructional leadership, a review: What do we know about principal, teacher, and coach instructional leadership, and where should we go from here?', *Educational Administration Quarterly*, vol. 49, pp310–347

Normore, A (2004), 'Socializing school administrators to meet leadership challenges that doom all but the most heroic and talented leaders to failure', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, vol.7 (2), pp107-125

Northouse, P G (2013), *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, London, Sage Publications

Notman, R (2017), 'Professional identity, adaptation and the self: Cases of New Zealand school principals during a time of change', *Educational Management, Administration & Leadership,* vol.45 (5), pp759-773

Open University Human Research Ethics Committee, (2014), *Ethics Principles for Research Involving Human Participants*, Milton Keynes, Open University

Open University, (2017), Research Ethics Website, http://www.open.ac.uk/research/ethics/ (Accessed April 2016)

Orchard, J (2002), 'Will the Real Superhero Stand Up? A Critical Review of the National Standards for Headteachers in England', *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, vol. 7, pp159-169

Ortiz, F I (1982), *Career patterns in education: Women, men and minorities in public school Administration*, New York, Praeger

QSRInternational, (2014), http://www.qsrinternational.com/products_nvivo-mac.aspx (Accessed 20 May 2015)

Qualtrics (2014) www.qualtrics.com (Accessed on 20 January 2015)

Palmer, B and Fresno, C.A (2016) 'Principal Selection: A National Study of Selection Criteria and Procedures', *Editorial Review Board*, vol.3 (3), pp6-18

Palmer, B, Kelly, J and Mullooly, J (2016) 'What should be done with 'Fit' in Principal Selection?', C*LEARvoz Journal,* vol. 3(1), pp.26-38

Peter, L J and Hull, R (1994), *The Peter Principle*, New York, Harper Collins

Petriglieri, G, Wood, J D, Petriglieri, J L (2011), 'Up Close and Personal: Building Foundations for Leaders' Development Through the Personalization of Management Learning**',** *Academy of Management Learning & Education,* vol.10, pp430-450

Rammer, R A (2007) 'Call to action for superintendents: change the way you hire principals', *The Journal of Educational Research*, vol.101 (2), pp67–76.

Rhodes, C Brundrett, M & Nevill, A (2009) 'Just the ticket? The National Professional Qualification and the transition to headship in the East Midlands of England', *Educational Review*, vol.61 (4), pp449-468

Roza, M, Celio, M B, Harvey, J and Wishon, S (2003), *A Matter of Definition: Is There Truly a Shortage of School Principals?*, Seattle, Washington University.

SAGE, Conducting Surveys, http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=13&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CC0QFjACOAo&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.uk.sagepub.com%2Fupm-data%2F51504_CH_1.pdf&ei=M8_pVNOwHqnQ7Aa8ioHYCQ&usg=AFQjCNEoHybxgJfEDtKD9zK4yhBI8suVEA&bvm=bv.86475890,d.ZGU (Accessed 15 February 2015

Sandberg, S (2015), *Lean In,* London, Penguin Random House

Schutz, A (1962), *Collected Papers I: The Problem of Social Reality,* The Hague, Martinus Nijhof

Sigford, J E (1998), *Who said school administration would be fun? Coping with a new emotional and social reality*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press

Silverman, D (2013), *Doing Qualitative Research*, London, SAGE

Silverman, D (2014), *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, London, SAGE

Sinha, S and Hanuscin, D L (2017), 'Development of teacher leadership identity: A multiple case study', *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol.63, pp356-371

Smith, J M (2011), 'Aspirations to and Perceptions of Secondary Headship: Contrasting Female Teachers' and Headteachers' Perspectives', *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, vol. 39 (5), pp516-535

Stake, R E (2006), *Multiple Case Study Analysis*, New York, The Guildford Press

Steward, J (2014), 'Sustaining emotional resilience for school leadership', *School Leadership & Management*, vol. 34 (1), pp52-68

Stewart, B (2016), 'Twitter as method: using twitter as a tool to conduct research', in *The SAGE handbook of social media research methods*, London, SAGE, pp251-265

Stryker, S (1980), *Symbolic Interactionism: a social structural version*, New Jersey, Blackburn Press

Survey Gizmo, www.surveygizmo.co.uk (Accessed on 20 January 2015)

Survey Monkey, www.surveymonkey.co.uk (Accessed on 20 January 2015)

TES, 19 September 2015, https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/headteacher-recruitment-crisis-sparks-fears-over-school-standards (Accessed on 21 September 2016)

TES, 22 April 2016, https://www.tes.com/news/school-news/breaking-news/exclusive-wilshaw-seldon-and-young-behind-new-college-parachute-nqts (Accessed on 28 May 2016)

Thomas, G (2013), *How to do your Research Project,* London, SAGE

Thomas, G (2016), *How to do your Case Study,* London, SAGE

Thomson, P, (2009) *School Leadership: Heads on the Block?*, Abingdon, Routledge

Tomlinson, H and Holmes, G (2001), 'Assessing leadership potential: fast track to school leadership', in *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol.39 (2), pp104-117

Trnavčevič, A and Roncelli Vaupot, S (2009), 'Exploring Aspiring Principals' Perceptions of Principalship: A Slovenian Case Study' in *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, vol.37, pp85-105

University of Portsmouth informed consent sample, http://www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0CC4QFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.port.ac.uk%2Fuopnews%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F2014%2F10%2FInformation-for-Student-Participants-New-Entrants-survey-2014.pdf&ei=ss3pVML8JcKP7Abn8oGQAg&usg=AFQjCNHaStPEIvd2QiA-i_3Toy-VUTfQ1g&bvm=bv.86475890,d.ZGU (Accessed 15 February 2015)

Walker, A and Kwan, P (2012), 'Principal selection panels: strategies, preferences and perceptions' in *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol.50 (2), pp188-205

Walker, S P (2010), *The Undefended Leader*, Carlisle, Piquant Editions Ltd

Webb, J, Shirato, T and Danaher, G (2002), *Understanding Bourdieu*, London, SAGE

Weller, M (2011), *The Digital Scholar: How Technology Is Transforming Scholarly Practice*, London, Bloomsbury

Wenner, J A and Campbell, T (2017) '**T**he Theoretical and Empirical Basis of Teacher Leadership**',** *Review of Educational Research,* vol.87 (1), pp134-171

Wildy, H, Pepper, C and Guanzhong, L (2011), 'Applying standards for leaders to the selection of secondary school principals', in *Journal of Educational Administration*, vol.49 (3), pp276-291

Wittgenstein, L (2009), *Philosophical Investigations*, P.M.S. Hacker and Joachim Schulte (eds. and trans.), Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell

WomenEd (n.d.) Women Ed, Available at http://www.womened.org (Accessed March 2017)

Woolcock, N (2016), 'Schools crisis as hundreds of heads quit', The Times, 31 December, p6

Yin, R.K, (2014) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, London, SAGE

Appendices

Appendix A: Questions and Results from Online Survey of Aspiring Heads

Considering Headship

Thank you for clicking to take this test!

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are being invited to take part in a research project. In order to decide whether or not you would like to participate, it is important for you to understand why this research is being undertaken and what it involves. If anything is not clear to you, or if you would like more information, please do contact me.

WHAT IS THIS ALL ABOUT?

I am undertaking an Educational Doctorate looking at the process of recruiting headteachers. This research consists of surveying those that are considering headship in the next few years as well as interviewing those involved in the recruitment process.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. Your participation is voluntary; if you do decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your participation from this study at any time up to the point of submission of the completed survey.

If you decide to participate, but subsequently do not want to complete the survey, you can simply close the webpage. If you do not click on the 'Submit' button at the end of the survey, your answers and participation will not be recorded. Once you have submitted the survey you will not be able to withdraw.

If, after reading this, you decide that you would like to participate, please continue to the survey. However, if you should decide not to participate, simply close the web page.

What do I have to do?

Complete an online survey, which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey includes questions about why you might want to apply for headship, your views on the recruitment process and on headship in general.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

No risks or discomforts are anticipated from taking part in this survey. The only perceived disadvantages of taking part in this research are the time taken to complete

the survey (approximately 10 minutes) and the personal effort on your part to complete the survey online.

Can I be identified from the information I supply?

The information you provide is confidential, except that anonymised quotes may be used if that is agreed (see Qu1 below). Otherwise, information you provide will be treated only as a source of background information, alongside literature-based research and interviews with others. Your name or any other personal identifying information will not appear in any publications resulting from this study; neither will there be anything to identify your place of work or the project you are involved in.

The information gained from this interview will only be used for the above objectives, will not be used for any other purpose and will not be recorded in excess of what is required for the research. By filling in this survey you indicate that you understand its purpose and consent to the use of the data as indicated above.

Thank you again for your cooperation!

Bethany Kelly
(@imisschalk)

1. I agree to the use of anonymised quotes from my response for research and publication purposes

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		55	93%
2	No		4	7%
	Total		59	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.07
Variance	0.06
Standard Deviation	0.25
Total Responses	59

2. What gender are you?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Male		21	38%
2	Female		35	63%
	Total		56	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.63
Variance	0.24
Standard Deviation	0.49
Total Responses	56

3. How long have you been in teaching?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	0-3 years		2	4%
2	4-9 years		10	18%
3	10-15 years		18	32%
4	16+ years		27	47%
5	I've been in another career not teaching		0	0%
	Total		57	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	4
Mean	3.23
Variance	0.75
Standard Deviation	0.87
Total Responses	57

4. What age bracket are you in?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	21-26 years old		1	2%
2	27-34 years old		10	18%
3	35 - 42 years old		24	42%
4	42 - 49 years old		19	33%
5	50 - 60 years old		3	5%
6	Over 60 year old		0	0%
7	I'd rather not say		0	0%
	Total		57	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	5
Mean	3.23
Variance	0.75
Standard Deviation	0.87
Total Responses	57

5. What type of schools have you taught in?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	State		45	79%
2	Fee paying		3	5%
3	A mixture		9	16%
	Total		57	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	3
Mean	1.37
Variance	0.56
Standard Deviation	0.75
Total Responses	57

6. Have you undertaken the NPQH (National Professional Qualification for Headship)

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		11	31%
2	No		25	69%
	Total		36	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.69
Variance	0.22
Standard Deviation	0.47
Total Responses	36

7. Is there a reason why you thought it was good to take the NPQH?

Text Response
It was compulsory at the time I took it.
I believed that it might have been good preparation for headship and facilitate career progression. In truth, I'm not sure it's better prepared when I do become a headteacher.
I took it 4 years into my Assistant Head role, partly to ensure that I had opportunities to develop breadth in my own leadership skill set and also, in a small way, to demonstrate to others that my capacity for higher level leadership was well developed.
I thought it would make me a better headteacher.
Personal development opportunity.
Although it is not essential I feel a lot of governors and employers would still look for it. I am in the middle of the application process at present.
Good professional development and thought it may help application processes for headship even though it's not mandatory anymore.
Necessary for headship
To show a depth of knowledge to be a headteacher mainly to Governors!

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	9

8. Is there a reason why you have not taken the NPQH?

Text Response
Not yet within the time period for applying for headship
Am planning to next academic year.
Don't feel ready to be head quite yet.
Cost
I've just completed the NPQSL.
Haven't considered it as a serious possibility. More likely to take an MA. Looking for a role in independent sector.
Trying to decide the best route..MA in Leadership or the NPQH....
Time and family, work life balance, Aspiring Heads course for Special School Leaders completed at NCSL
I plan to in the next couple of years. I did the NPQSL
Teaching internationally so very costly
Time, not sure if it is a necessary/ useful qualification to be a headteacher
Started the pre-NPQH and found that it was like training to be an Ofsted inspector, not a head.
On NPQSL presently
In next round
Just completing NPQSL. Will progress to NPQH on completion.
Not yet had the opportunity
Working on EdD
No
Cost to school Time to complete
I have done a masters instead
Applied for it this year.
Decided I would rather quality as an Ofsted inspector, did not see need for/use of NPQH.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	22

9. How important are the following factors for you to consider applying for a headship post?

#	Question	Not at all Important	Somewhat useful	Important	Extremely Important	Total Responses	Mean
1	The Headship brochure	7	14	12	2	35	2.26
2	The Job Description	1	6	14	15	36	3.19
3	The Person Specification	1	5	14	16	36	3.25
4	A School Prospectus	1	17	10	8	36	2.69
5	A letter from the Chair of Governors	0	21	13	2	36	2.47
6	The School Website	0	9	15	12	36	3.08
7	A visit to the School	2	5	5	24	36	3.42

10. By dragging to rearrange these factors, rank in order what you feel are the most important being considered by those involved with the appointment of a new Head:

#	Answer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total Responses
2	Qualifications	0	4	4	2	5	3	7	4	5	1	2	0	0	37
12	Proven track record in classroom	2	2	4	5	5	3	4	2	3	4	2	0	1	37
7	Personality	3	3	6	4	8	6	2	2	1	1	1	0	0	37
3	Leadership style	9	7	6	6	2	2	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	37
5	Knowledge of the school	1	2	0	3	1	7	3	4	5	7	3	1	0	37
6	Knowledge of the area	0	0	1	1	1	2	3	4	2	8	11	2	2	37
13	Knowledge of Policies and Paperwork	0	0	2	1	4	2	6	5	6	3	1	3	4	37
9	Gender	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	2	2	12	18	37
11	Financial Acumen	1	0	1	3	1	4	2	7	5	3	4	2	4	37
1	Experience	18	8	2	4	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	37
4	Confidence	3	7	3	7	6	4	4	0	1	2	0	0	0	37
8	Authority	0	4	7	1	3	3	1	3	6	2	7	0	0	37
10	Age	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	2	2	1	4	17	8	37
	Total	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	-

Statistic	Experience	Qualifications	Leadership style	Confidence	Knowledge of the school	Knowledge of the area	Personality	Authority	Gender	Age	Financial Acumen	Proven track record in classroom	Knowledge of Policies and Paperwork
Min Value	1	2	1	1	1	3	1	2	8	3	1	1	3
Max Value	10	11	10	10	12	13	11	11	13	13	13	13	13
Mean	2.51	6.19	3.49	4.46	7.49	9.35	4.84	6.70	12.00	11.16	8.38	6.14	8.30
Variance	5.26	6.82	6.15	5.70	7.65	5.79	5.86	10.83	2.11	4.75	9.13	9.56	7.99
Standard Deviation	2.29	2.61	2.48	2.39	2.77	2.41	2.42	3.29	1.45	2.18	3.02	3.09	2.83
Total Responses	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37	37

11. Have you ever been approached by a Recruitment Consultant?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		8	24%
2	No		25	76%
	Total		33	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.76
Variance	0.19
Standard Deviation	0.44
Total Responses	33

12. Did you find it helpful to your process of considering headship to talk with a Recruitment Consultant?

Text Response
Yes. Helped me to refine my thoughts about the type of school to apply for. Feedback from applications has been useful; you don't get feedback at that stage through a direct application.
Not particularly.
No
Yes, but they will only tell you the good points generally
Yes in some cases
Sometimes
Yes, incredibly helpful, TES Prime have given me confidence to apply.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	7

13. Have you considered contacting any recruitment firms?

Text Response
No
No
No, not yet
No
Yes
No
No
No.
Not as yet.
No
No
No
No
No
No
No
No
No
No

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	19

14. Was there a trigger or triggers that made you consider applying for headship posts?

Text Response
Have always wanted to be a headteacher and lead my own school, working with poor senior leaders has motivated me further.
succeeding to deputy
Finding myself an acting head without warning, and realising I could actually do the job and enjoyed it.
Wanted greater challenge
Basically genuine desire for career progression as I am very happy in my current school.
I haven't yet applied for headship
No. Just natural progression.
Initial contact from an agency and comments from current Head
Approaching 50... Been teaching for 27 years...enjoy Senior Leadership , very aware that if I do not apply for a headship soon I may be regarded as too old!
Completing NPQH.
Opportunity
I've always wanted to be a head, I believe the right head has huge impact on the outcomes for the students and their communities
When you realise that the Head you are working for is not listening to your advice
Felt the time was right.
no
Natural progression although doing an acting headship confirmed it for me.
I have been in post as deputy head for six years now and was considering going to a bigger school as deputy. However other heads have encouraged me to have a go myself.
The right time for me in my professional career compared to my personal life
Just feeling that I am capable of doing a good job. Feeling somewhat undervalued at times I n current role. Taken for granted!
Imminent departure of current head
An interesting advert prompted me to apply, I was short listed but not successful however it was a very developmental experience and am now looking more actively
Personal confidence that I could do a better job that my current head!
Am an assistant head. My school is going through a restructure so started to seriously evaluate future options and personal plans.
Wanting to be in charge - not in a egotistical way but wanting to be responsible for making a difference to young people life's. Being able to challenge the wrong things etc.
Completing my masters
Feeling ready, head ship coming up in a school that I really wanted to lead, TES job alerts highlighting interesting opportunity.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	26

15. Do you think applying for headships involves any kind of identity shift?

#	Answer		Response	%
1	Yes		23	72%
2	No		9	28%
	Total		32	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	1
Max Value	2
Mean	1.28
Variance	0.21
Standard Deviation	0.46
Total Responses	32

16. By dragging the bar show to what extent do you think you have already mentally shifted from seeing yourself as a Teacher (1) to seeing yourself as a headteacher (10)?

#	Answer		Response	%
0	0		0	0%
1	1		0	0%
2	2		0	0%
3	3		0	0%
4	4		0	0%
5	5		0	0%
6	6		2	7%
7	7		6	20%
8	8		8	27%
9	9		10	33%
10	10		4	13%
	Total		30	100%

Statistic	Value
Min Value	6
Max Value	10
Mean	8.27
Variance	1.31
Standard Deviation	1.14
Total Responses	30

17. Do you think that aspiring headteachers would benefit from being mentored?

Text Response
Yes!
Yes
Yes!
Yes
Yes
Maybe but mentoring would be better focused on new headteachers as it is not until you are in post that you truly realise what the job entails.
Yes, definitely.
Yes
Yes. The opportunity to be mentored within and outside of the current school would be beneficial. To my mind, a strong headteacher should be actively mentoring and finding opportunities for existing Deputies and Assistant Heads to experience the range and challenge of headship in their own context. They should also be supporting external mentoring to enable colleagues to experience breadth across different school settings.
Definitely.
Yes. The role is so vastly different that it is important to have this sort of help.
Yes, would be most helpful in taking the next step.
Yes
Yes - or preferably coached.
Yes
Yes
Yes
Absolutely
Yes
No
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes
Yes, I think this is very positive. I have not received any such mentoring at this level. My current head professes to be supportive but makes no effort to help me gain more experience or opportunity
Yes
Definitely
Yes dependent upon skill set of the mentor. There is a lot of dross out there.
Yes
Yes
Yes, absolutely
Yes

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	32

18. How effective do you think the following aspects of the selection process are for establishing potential leadership and suitability?

#	Question	Very Ineffective	Ineffective	Neither Effective nor Ineffective	Effective	Very Effective	Total Responses	Mean
1	Application Letter	0	1	4	20	4	29	3.93
2	References	0	0	5	15	9	29	4.14
3	Panel Interview	0	0	1	13	15	29	4.48
4	Interview with pupils	1	1	8	10	9	29	3.86
5	Tour of the School	1	3	11	13	1	29	3.34
6	In-tray exercises	0	5	9	10	5	29	3.52
7	Role-playing exercise	1	7	8	11	2	29	3.21
8	Conversations over meal	0	4	7	15	3	29	3.59
9	Leading an assembly	0	0	6	14	9	29	4.10
10	Psychological Testing	2	3	11	8	3	27	3.26
11	Conversations with Governors	0	0	3	21	5	29	4.07
12	Presentation	0	0	5	14	10	29	4.17

Statistic	Application Letter	References	Panel Interview	Interview with pupils	Tour of the School	In-tray exercises	Role-playing exercise	Conversations over meal	Leading an assembly	Psychological Testing	Conversations with Governors	Presentation
Min Value	2	3	3	1	1	2	1	2	3	1	3	3
Max Value	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
Mean	3.93	4.14	4.48	3.86	3.34	3.52	3.21	3.59	4.10	3.26	4.07	4.17
Variance	0.42	0.48	0.33	1.05	0.73	0.97	1.03	0.75	0.52	1.12	0.28	0.50
Standard Deviation	0.65	0.69	0.57	1.03	0.86	0.99	1.01	0.87	0.72	1.06	0.53	0.71
Total Responses	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	27	29	29

19. How fair do you feel the selection process is?

Text Response

1. Depends on the school...
2. I hope that it us fair but I do worry as a young female that I may be overlooked in favour of older men!
3. Usually fair
4. Fair
5. It depends on what the process is!
6. Varied. Difficult when you are interviewed alongside current headteachers - the aforementioned identity shift has already happened and they have experience, which is impossible to get as a Deputy Head.
7. They are fair but inconsistent between different schools and you subsequently are unsure about what each school actually wants.
8. Not had direct experience
9. Shortlisting based purely on a paper application seems the most unfair part of the process.
10. Generally very fair. Important decision, so requires a fairly gruelling process.
11. Having not yet applied for a headship I cannot comment but the interviews I attended for Deputy position have been very rigorous.
12. Not very
13. As fair as any selection process can be.
14. Fair
15. Very
16. It depends on the establishment. Mostly for heads it is fair.
17. Obviously loaded in favour of an internal applicant, as the data bank for making a decision is so much deeper
18. Depends how it is structured.
19. That would depend on the process - all have been different!
20. As fair as any process can be given that there will still be an 'ideal' in the minds of the recruitment panel.
21. I often feel employers have in mind who they would like before the interview process but then that is probably the case in all jobs.
22. Quite fair
23. I think it's fair but it often isn't very effective or imaginative .

24. Very

25. Depends on how well those selecting are capable of doing it

26. Unfair. My experience: shortlisted, then all 6 candidates sent home after end day one, reasons given did not make sense. Internal candidate (who had been one of the six) got it at next advert. Second application (different head ship) - not shortlisted, all six candidates sent home at end of day one, they will re-advertise.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	26

20. Which do you think is the best way for you to convey your leadership potential during the recruitment process?

Text Response
interview/presentations
Leading a discussion with the rest of SLT, planning a project / initiative.
Interview
Opportunities to interact with the actual staff and/or pupils, perhaps running a staff meeting; opportunities to demonstrate thinking on your feet eg presenting something unplanned.
Presentations and questioning.
presentations, staff panels and strategic planning.
Presentation and viva type process, along with robust panel questioning
Presentation.
Through the interview and tasks where you can demonstrate your abilities. School assembly gives an indication of how you would establish the leadership relationship with pupils.
Leaders need to empower their staff, gain the trust and confidence from pupils and parents thus a task during the interview process involving pupils, parents and staff.
being myself
Honesty.
A range of situations
Interview and presentation
I think they should visit you in your current school.
Going to visit the school shows initiative and that you want to know the most you can before being sure it is the right place for you to lead
Interview
Dunstable experience of leading in current senior post
Talk with passion and exemplify.
Through conversation and talking about what I have already achieved and the successes I have had in leadership.
During informal discussions with staff, pupils, parents and governors.
People have to get to know me somewhat to recognise my merits so this is difficult to achieve in very short session nd.
By example with children
Interim
Be seen in interactions with staff and students
Being male ;) (I am female...)

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	26

21. How essential do you think these qualities are for headship?

#	Question	Not at all Important	Somewhat useful	Important	Crucial	Total Responses	Mean
1	Innovative	0	2	23	4	29	3.07
2	Good Communicator	0	0	2	27	29	3.93
3	Extrovert	9	11	8	0	28	1.96
4	Sense of Humour	0	3	11	15	29	3.41
5	Resilience	0	0	3	26	29	3.90
6	Good Listener	0	0	7	22	29	3.76
7	Enthusiasm	0	0	7	22	29	3.76
8	Strong Values	0	1	4	24	29	3.79
9	Good Judgement	0	1	6	22	29	3.72
10	Team Player	0	2	12	15	29	3.45
11	Inspirational	0	0	12	17	29	3.59
12	Strategic Thinker	0	0	8	21	29	3.72

Statistic	Innovative	Good Communicator	Extrovert	Sense of Humour	Resilience	Good Listener	Enthusiasm	Strong Values	Good Judgement	Team Player	Inspirational	Strategic Thinker
Min Value	2	3	1	2	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	3
Max Value	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Mean	3.07	3.93	1.96	3.41	3.90	3.76	3.76	3.79	3.72	3.45	3.59	3.72
Variance	0.21	0.07	0.63	0.47	0.10	0.19	0.19	0.24	0.28	0.40	0.25	0.21
Standard Deviation	0.46	0.26	0.79	0.68	0.31	0.44	0.44	0.49	0.53	0.63	0.50	0.45
Total Responses	29	29	28	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29	29

22. If you could change one factor of the recruitment process for headship what would it be?

Text Response
Length of process
I would like to see headteachers still expected to teach a lesson to show they can still do the bread and butter!
Involve staff interview
Unseen/timed in-tray exercises requiring more then prioritisation.
Letter of application
Informal conversations between current employer and potential new school.
More opportunities to meet with the staff.
The requirement of the NPQH or MA.... A good track record of appropriate professional development and experience should hopefully count for a lot...
Make it mandatory to include an approved consultant (e.g. ASCL or NCSL) to advise the Governors.
Role play
I'd have more honesty about the school, no hidden agenda just the vision the school actually needs.
Get the panel to visit the candidates in situ at their own school, and ask some of their colleagues about them
Depends which process. They are all different.
No application forms AND CVs required! Why is it drawn out over such a long period of time - speed it up please!
Allow candidates to use current teachers in the school as 'character references'. There's no better group of people for advising on whether the person has what it takes to lead.
The whole process of NPQH being so long winded
Writing massive long personal statements.
Governors need to have more training in the process as their approach can be quite superficial depending on their backgrounds.
Don't know
observing final short list candidates in their own school for a day
A panel of well meaning but inexperienced governors asking meaningless questions and inanely nodding
Build short periods of "down time" in to the selection day(s), give candidates a chance to be at their best, gather their thoughts and be ready to express themselves.

Statistic	Value
Total Responses	22

Appendix B: Table of Schools Sampled for Study of Headship Job Applications

Geographical distribution of schools involved in the analysis of headship recruitment packs

	Job Title	Age range	Boys	Girls	Mixed	Academy	Fee Paying	State	Faith	NOR
1	Headteacher	11-18			✓			✓		2000
2	Principal	11-18			✓	✓				1300
3	Headteacher	11-18		✓	✓ (6)	✓			RC	900
4	Principal	3-18			✓		✓			2200
5	Head	3-18			✓		✓			400
6	Principal	3-18			✓		✓			1100
7	Head	7-18		✓			✓			770
8	Head	3-18			✓		✓		Quaker	620
9	Head	3-18			✓		✓		CofE	550
10	Principal	11-18			✓	✓				800
11	Headteacher	11-18			✓			✓		1370
12	Head	3-18			✓		✓			530
13	Head	3-18		✓			✓			670
14	Headteacher	11-18			✓	✓				830
15	Headteacher	11-18		✓		✓				900
16	Headteacher	11-18	✓			✓				840
17	Headteacher	11-18		✓		✓			Xn	900
18	Principal	3-18			✓	✓				570

19	Headteacher	11-18			✓	✓				933
20	Headteacher	3-18			✓		✓			300
21	Headteacher	11-16			✓	✓				670
22	Principal	3-16			✓	✓		✓	Xn	60
23	Head	3-16			✓		✓			300
24	Headteacher	11-16			✓			✓		680
25	Headteacher	11-18	✓		✓ (6)	✓		✓		1440
26	Principal	11-18		✓		✓		✓	RC	1070
27	Executive Principal	11-18		✓		✓		✓	Muslim	700
28	Head	3-18			✓		✓			900
29	Headteacher	11-18			✓			✓		470
30	Headteacher	11-18			✓			✓	RC& CofE	350

Appendix C: Word Frequency Chart of Person Specifications from Headship Job Application Packs (Top 50 words)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage
1. school	6	187	2.94%
2. experience	10	131	2.06%
3. ability	7	102	1.60%
4. leadership	10	77	1.21%
5. skills	6	68	1.07%
6. management	10	62	0.97%
7. application	11	58	0.91%
8. commitment	10	56	0.88%
9. development	11	52	0.82%
10. interview	9	49	0.77%
11. understanding	13	48	0.75%
12. staff	5	47	0.74%
13. form	4	46	0.72%
14. community	9	43	0.68%
15. professional	12	43	0.68%
16. effective	9	41	0.64%
17. education	9	40	0.63%
18. high	4	40	0.63%
19. successful	10	40	0.63%
20. learning	8	39	0.61%
21. personal	8	37	0.58%
22. evidence	8	36	0.57%
23. teaching	8	35	0.55%
24. knowledge	9	32	0.50%
25. good	4	31	0.49%
26. able	4	30	0.47%
27. including	9	30	0.47%

28. proven	6	30	0.47%
29. record	6	30	0.47%
30. desirable	9	29	0.46%
31. qualifications	14	29	0.46%
32. educational	11	28	0.44%
33. others	6	28	0.44%
34. people	6	28	0.44%
35. person	6	28	0.44%
36. working	7	27	0.42%
37. essential	9	25	0.39%
38. schools	7	25	0.39%
39. standards	9	25	0.39%
40. degree	6	24	0.38%
41. specification	13	24	0.38%
42. strong	6	24	0.38%
43. students	8	24	0.38%
44. demonstrate	11	23	0.36%
45. head	4	23	0.36%
46. strategic	9	23	0.36%
47. appropriate	11	22	0.35%
48. effectively	11	22	0.35%
49. communication	13	21	0.33%
50. level	5	21	0.33%

Appendix D: Word Frequency Chart of Job Description from Headship Job Application Packs (Top 50 Words)

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage
1. school	6	561	3.68%
2. ensure	6	223	1.46%
3. staff	5	205	1.34%
4. learning	8	183	1.20%
5. community	9	164	1.08%
6. development	11	147	0.96%
7. effective	9	141	0.93%
8. work	4	131	0.86%
9. students	8	127	0.83%
10. teaching	8	116	0.76%
11. academy	7	107	0.70%
12. management	10	105	0.69%
13. leadership	10	89	0.58%
14. parents	7	89	0.58%
15. high	4	83	0.54%
16. support	7	83	0.54%
17. appropriate	11	81	0.53%
18. develop	7	81	0.53%
19. ensuring	8	81	0.53%

20. governors	9	80	0.52%
21. local	5	77	0.51%
22. strategic	9	76	0.50%
23. headteacher	11	74	0.49%
24. governing	9	72	0.47%
25. body	4	71	0.47%
26. head	4	68	0.45%
27. provide	7	67	0.44%
28. performance	11	66	0.43%
29. standards	9	66	0.43%
30. education	9	63	0.41%
31. pupils	6	63	0.41%
32. quality	7	62	0.41%
33. responsibilities	16	62	0.41%
34. vision	6	62	0.41%
35. working	7	61	0.40%
36. curriculum	10	60	0.39%
37. maintain	8	60	0.39%
38. resources	9	58	0.38%
39. within	6	58	0.38%
40. educational	11	57	0.37%
41. create	6	55	0.36%
42. effectively	11	55	0.36%
43. promote	7	55	0.36%
44. achievement	11	54	0.35%
45. professional	12	54	0.35%
46. schools	7	54	0.35%
47. policies	8	53	0.35%
48. including	9	52	0.34%
49. improvement	11	49	0.32%
50. ethos	5	48	0.31%

Appendix E: Framework for Semi-structured interviews of those involved in Recruitment

Issue / Topic	Possible Questions	Possible Follow up Questions	Probes
Difficulty of recruiting headteachers	Has anything changed in terms of profiles of candidates? Materials: what goes into the writing of it? What are the key factors that help with short-listing?	Why do you think this is? What do you think is the most important aspect in conveying role? Why is this?	How can this be tackled? Does this always come across to candidates? Are there aspects you would leave out?
What is being looked for in terms of Leadership?	How is leadership potential determined? Do certain personality traits make a difference? Is there a preferred balance in terms of knowledge/experience compared to potential?	How confident are you that you can assess potential? Do you have to connect with an applicant? Does something like the NPQH make a difference?	Have you ever reflected on a conversation and thought differently? Are there any perceived difference with men and women? How important are qualifications for headship?
Confidence in the process	What do you feel is the most effective part of the selection process? Is there anything you don't do that would be a good addition? How do you ensure fairness in your recruitment processes?	Is consistency hard to achieve, for example with panel interviews? Is there anything about the process that you feel restricted by? What would you do if you felt it wasn't fair?	How important is it for the candidate to have their own vision for the school? How could the processes be improved? Do they need to be?

Appendix F: Information Sheet for Interview participants

The Centre for Research in Education and
Educational Technology (CREET)
The Open University
Stuart Hall Building (Ground Floor)
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA
Phone +44 (0)1908 655364

Contact me:

Main Contact: **Bethany K Kelly**
Email: bkk32@open.ac.uk

The Open University

An investigation into the professional identity of educational leaders and the recruitment and selection of Headteachers in England

Tell us about your experiences and views relating to the recruitment of Headteachers in the UK

I am currently carrying out a study investigating the process of recruiting Headteachers in the UK. As part of the research I am interviewing people about their experiences and views of recruitment and selection. I am conducting the research on behalf as part of my Education Doctorate. This leaflet gives you more information about the study.

Why do you want to interview me?

I am currently involved in an investigation into the process of recruitment and selection of Headteachers in UK Schools. As part of my main study I am speaking with a range of people, like yourself, involved with the recruitment process. This includes Aspiring Headteachers, and Existing Heads.

What will the interview be like?

- The interview would have a semi-structured format in that I will have some questions, but I will respond to the answers you give during the time.
- The interview will take an hour to an hour and a half, giving you the opportunity to talk in greater depth about your views and experiences of the recruitment of headteachers.
- The interview will be recorded so that we can be sure that we correctly remember everything that you tell us.
- The interviewer will come to your workplace or if it is easier it can take place using Skype, at a time that suits you.

What sorts of things would the interview be about?

The kinds of issues we would like to talk to you about are:

- Your current experience of the recruitment of headteachers, any potential difficulties you perceive of the existing process
- An evaluation of the existing elements that play a part of the selection process and your suggestions of what works well
- Your views on current perceptions of Headship.

What will happen to the information I give?

The information that you give will be drawn together with what other people in the study tell me in a thesis. Any personal information given will be confidential to the research team. Anonymity will be maintained within the report so individuals are not identifiable. If you wish, we can send you a copy of the final report.

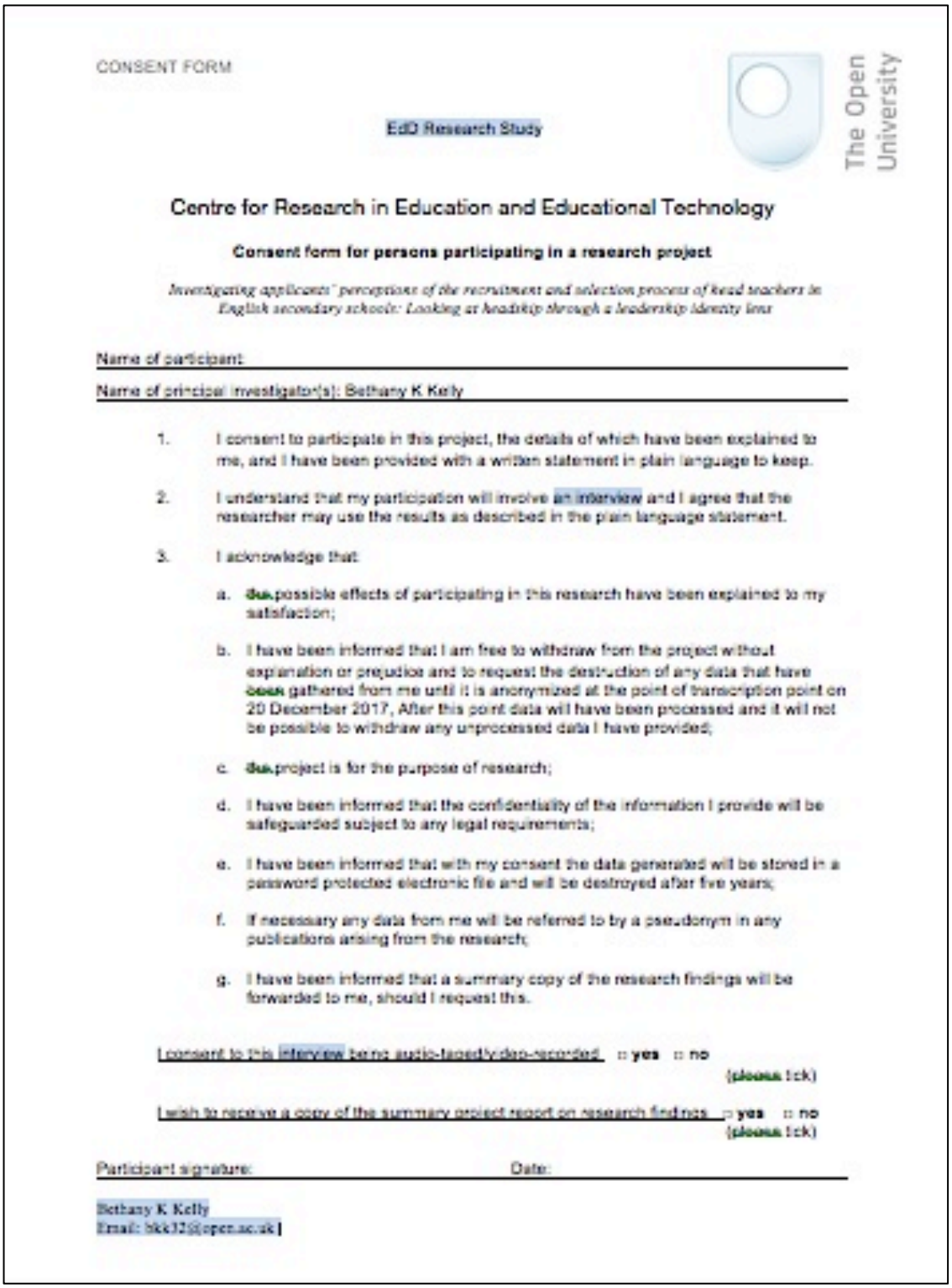
How will we arrange the interview?

I will get in contact with you to decide the best time and way for the interview to take place. If you are still happy to be involved, we can arrange a time that is convenient for you.

My responsibilities to you:

- **I will guard your privacy:** your participation will be treated in strict confidence in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Your contribution will be used for research purposes only. Individuals will not be identified in the final report.
- **I will respect your wishes:** participation in the study is voluntary. If you do not want to take part, just let me know when I contact you.
- **I will answer your questions:** I will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the research.

Appendix G: Sample interview consent form for Interview participants



CONSENT FORM

EdD Research Study

The Open University

Centre for Research in Education and Educational Technology

Consent form for persons participating in a research project

Investigating applicants' perceptions of the recruitment and selection process of head teachers in English secondary schools: Looking at headship through a leadership identity lens

Name of participant:

Name of principal investigator(s): Bethany K Kelly

1. I consent to participate in this project, the details of which have been explained to me, and I have been provided with a written statement in plain language to keep.
2. I understand that my participation will involve an interview and I agree that the researcher may use the results as described in the plain language statement.
3. I acknowledge that:
   a. the possible effects of participating in this research have been explained to my satisfaction;
   b. I have been informed that I am free to withdraw from the project without explanation or prejudice and to request the destruction of any data that have been gathered from me until it is anonymized at the point of transcription point on 20 December 2017. After this point data will have been processed and it will not be possible to withdraw any unprocessed data I have provided;
   c. the project is for the purpose of research;
   d. I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements;
   e. I have been informed that with my consent the data generated will be stored in a password protected electronic file and will be destroyed after five years;
   f. If necessary any data from me will be referred to by a pseudonym in any publications arising from the research;
   g. I have been informed that a summary copy of the research findings will be forwarded to me, should I request this.

I consent to this interview being audio-taped/video-recorded □ yes □ no (please tick)

I wish to receive a copy of the summary project report on research findings □ yes □ no (please tick)

Participant signature: Date:

Bethany K Kelly
Email: bkk32@open.ac.uk

Appendix H: Thematic table of responses from the Interviews

Quotations from the Semi-Structured Interviews
Role of Headteacher
▪ "I think probably in the past you were judged more on how outward looking you were, how good were in public, that sort of thing, so yeah I suspect it's broadened the field probably" ▪ "I think a head now needs to be much more business au fait and have some knowledge of how schools work in terms of marketing" ▪ "Candidates having certain characteristics helps? Yes, confidence is absolutely key, you know I met people of both genders in the process, you thought, you're not going to go anywhere and sure enough they weren't back the second day." ▪ "I think its really important, because you are the leader of teaching and learning, you're the head and I think you need to be a really good practitioner to be a head." ▪ "Historically it used to be about just managing, having a vision of education and now its much more about the management of staff than it ever was." ▪ "Its far less I think about people and relationships and outcomes, human outcomes if you like, it is much more about processes and systems and box ticking I suspect." ▪ "Its not about power at all, it is totally about service. Yes of course I enjoy…what comes with it, but actually I could relinquish that. Its about making the school a better place." ▪ "I think that it is perfectly possible to be a head without being particularly charismatic, without being a people person and I think that probably wasn't the case a few years ago" ▪ "Yes there is a specific character trait that you need either showmanship for want of a better word or self-belief and determination"
Recruitment materials
▪ "What they wanted was quite generic, I didn't really look at any of those and think that's me, but on visiting the school you got more a sense of Oh actually I think they're looking for someone like me." ▪ "The pack that goes on line, nothing about that is going to be in the pack on line, because that is in the public domain, which is why applicants have to visit" ▪ "I don't think the paperwork gives you an insight into how much knowledge you really need at all. I think the application forms all look quite similar and to a point it depends on what interviews you're going for." ▪ "Actually most adverts for heads are asking for the same things, you could more less copy and paste the words from any advert and just stick the name of the new school on the top of it. You only get a sense of whether school is right for you by going and have a look at it." ▪ "As for their job description and criteria, when you sent off to find out more, they seem to be looking for the same person you know, what they're saying about themselves was quite different" ▪ "So a job description talking about you are responsible for this that and the other, but you can never get across what that feels like"

Leadership Identity
▪ "I think introducing people to the idea of leadership at any age is a good thing and don't forget that leadership, being a parent is about being a leader, being a classroom teacher is about being a leader. So what does leadership look like in the classroom? Is your starting point" ▪ "For me, my internal belief that I could do it, came from people externally telling me that I could do it and you're getting reasonably positive feedback from parents and pupils and staff, it you makes you think that yeah ok you might be able to go for it and you have to have a certain amount of self belief, but it has to be founded on an experience so for me the external came first and the internal came after that." ▪ "I think you actually become much more aware of your character traits the longer you've been in teaching and the more leaders you work with. It really makes you refine and really reflect on what your character traits are, what you want to be and what you don't want to be." ▪ "There has always been within me this drive to be, to achieve the best I possibly can. I now look back and wish I had enjoyed that a bit more." ▪ "If you were in the Army or in Business there would be a leadership programme from day one and its not there within, if you're not careful, its not there within the institutions, I think that's absolutely right." ▪ "I don't think you need the experience to be able to show you're a leader. You can show you that throughout the process and the way you express yourself on paper and the things you've done in the past and evidence that you can bring people with you, but mostly it comes from talking to them in interview." ▪ "I think I was ambitious, restless, I think whatever career I went into I would have wanted to be at the top of it, so I didn't become academic, because I saw the elephant in who was teaching it and I was nowhere near as good." ▪ "You don't have to be talking so much about being THE leader, but you do have to be talking about them being A leader and what it means to be that." ▪ "I think teachers are not aware of how much leadership they're actually doing." ▪ "I've been teaching 28 years and it was only recently that I've started reflecting on when did I start leading?" ▪ "I think agencies will see that leadership journey, because they have conversations with the applicants, they meet them individually before they do the long list" ▪ "What tipped me to becoming a head was experiencing incredibly poor leadership and those experiences make you stronger, they make you much stronger I think" ▪ "There were a lot of people who said I would have never considered headship, but my multi-academy trust is telling me to go for it."
Shortlisting
▪ 'They didn't bother reading they weren't interested in the tone or the details they were just looking for evidence that you had achieved those six criteria and it was literally tick, tick, tick' ▪ "The last time when I was interviewed for this job, I was asked to go for another job and I said unless I'm in the top three I'm not coming." ▪ "With the short list procedure. I do wonder sometimes whether there is a hidden agenda" ▪ "I think when they were doing their shortlist they thought we better bring a women

along" ▪ "As long as they are clear what they are looking for then it shouldn't be unfair"
Experience
▪ "You have to really dig deep and think, wait a minute, how do I know my leadership has strengthened, because you go through your career and you just do it, because you're passionate and you love it and now I've become far more reflective and I stop and look at successes and challenges and unpick them." ▪ "Those who felt most nervous are those who haven't had the experience of SMT" ▪ [Of the Deputy Head role] "its definitely a step for headship. What happens is an appreciation is how the school runs on a day to day basis, I think that's really, really important, that you understand that and see how the nuts and bolts work together"
Selection Processes
▪ "I think the most significant thing to me in terms of application was visiting the school" ▪ "The interviewers hold all the cards, call the shots, whatever you want. You're in a much weaker position as the candidate." ▪ "It was important how I answered interview questions because I was answering them as a deputy and the feedback given to me in a practice interview was governors are looking for the finished article so I had to think as a headteacher to answer the questions so the interviews are more about you being a plausible and reliable headteacher than about all the good stuff you've done at the deputy" ▪ "I think that probably the least effective are these in-tray tasks, I don't think they are effective at all. Maybe they are, I don't know, I just think maybe they are a bit old hat now? There are other interesting things that you could be doing." ▪ There "was a brutal in-tray exercise and it really made me think actually what are your values here and what are you going to prioritize and why and I thought that was really interesting" ▪ "There was no sense of personality, no sense of fit, no sense of are you the right, have you got the right values for the school are you the right kind of person, it was all about box ticking literally ticking the box, and the interview process was exactly the same" ▪ "There is a distinction I think between those who are able to perform at interview and those who struggle and I'm usually quite good at interview." ▪ "The one thing that you never really do again as a head is be interviewed for the job that you're going to do" ▪ "It has to be managed and it has to go to a process and the compliance agenda is about preventing failure and stopping judgment and if you therefore got a lot of inexperienced chairs of governors in schools if you give them a tick box process it will then all be about doing rather than being" ▪ "I think it really does come down to the best candidate will get the job. I think when you've got internal candidate there's a lot of politics involved as well" ▪ "I think the governors get ready hung up on what tasks they are going to do and what do we need to see and maybe don't spend enough time as a group, thinking through, how confident am I to recruit a head teacher" ▪ "I think there would be scope when you first apply to pick up the phone and have an hour's chat with the chair of governors just tell it how it is" ▪ "It just is a bit sad if that generation of maybe slightly golden, more risk taking heads are ruled out because they're not ticking the boxes in the right way"

- "I do think the governing body has in their mind what sort of character they want and if you are not that kind of character, then you're not going to get it, regardless of what skills you've got"
- "I think in the interview process you have to be able to hold the room and you have to lead them if you like, yeah, you haven't got the experience to back you up but you can still tell from the way that you're communicating whether you are a convincing speaker and whether you can persuade people to buy into, in this case, to buy into your vision"

Gender

- "And then the short list procedure. I do wonder sometimes whether there is a hidden agenda. I went to one interview and there was 6 males and me and I went I'm the token female"
- "I think coaching for interview technique is really important because I do think that women are more likely to only talk about things that they have done and not visualise this amazing school leader that they can be"
- "Women in particular think can I really do that job, am I as good as other people"
- "Certainly more men are shortlisted for secondary, based on my experiences, and proportionally in terms of workforce, there are apparently more secondary male heads as a the proportion of the work. So more men are coming through to be secondary heads"
- "I know of people that I've worked with who are convinced that the entire headship appointment process is one giant old school tie and that you know certain types of people, whether they are female or younger or gay or whatever it might be, will by definition not get a headship. I don't buy into that at all."

Applicants

- "I think it's really important for people going for headship that you only go for interviews if you've visited the school and its fits with you. It fits with your values and principles, I see people going for headship and think why are you going to that school?"
- "I am giving my senior leaders and middle leaders the experience to take a project, run a project, lead it, lead others, so that they've got things to talk about and write about it. So that when it comes to interview they've got something they're confident about."
- "I think its really important for people going for headship that you only go for interviews if you've visited the school and its fits with you. It fits with your values and principles, I see people going for headship and think why are you going to that school?"
- "The skills that got you to that head of department, you're this brilliant teacher and everyone thinks you do a great job as a teacher, it doesn't mean you can manage people and organise the exam entries or think beyond your current specifications or be creative about your curriculum and the fact you're brilliant manager of a small team and organizer doesn't mean you can think long term and be a strategic leader so it is a huge flaw in the system"

Vision

- "What is important, is in application you need to really clarify your vision"
- "My personal vision was a very good match with the vision of the school. I'm sure that's the case with most heads actually, do you say you're the best fit"
- "You have to be able to set out clearly what the selling points of the school are, what is different and you can call that the vision at the school, that's basically the same thing"
- "So those that have got great vision, that are strong communicators, that aren't afraid

to tackle issues. That have a natural charisma, they are hard working, they look at the detail"

- "Its really hard to know what your vision is when you come into headship, because you've got to know the school, you've got to know the staff, you've got to know your parents and then your vision will start to develop"
- "One of the first things we did is get our vision down on paper and that is vital because you can't if you say you just want to be a head teacher and I will just fit in with whatever the school's got, that's not going to get you anywhere"